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· THE · MAN · WHO · SURVIVED ·

· CAMILLE MARBO ·

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FROM

Francis R. Stoddard

Col. Francis R. Stoddard

THE MAN WHO SURVIVED

[See page 69

"I shall propose to her that we come together when the time appears ripe. I wait and watch."

The Man Who Survived

BY

CAMILLE MARBO

TRANSLATED BY

FRANK HUNTER POTTER

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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✓

Francis R. Stoddard

THE MAN WHO SURVIVED

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Awakening	1
II.	The Crape Veils	26
III.	The Enchanted Shore	68
IV.	The Shadow of the Past	109
V.	The Phantoms	155
VI.	The Deliverance	179

THE MAN WHO SURVIVED

THE MAN WHO SURVIVED

I

THE AWAKENING

I SEEM to be floating. Stretched on a couch of clouds, I feel that I can let myself go and yet not fall, and so I yield myself to sleep. Purposely I abandon control of my arms and legs; I give myself up wholly and sink into the soft cloud. Shadowy shapes move about me in this colorless, formless atmosphere; they seem about to disappear. If they leave me I shall cease my happy floating. I start, I begin to struggle, and I awake.

I wake, but how heavy my feet are! Am I a child again, and am I wearing worsted bed-slippers because I am feverish? A tight helmet

about my head stifles me. I want to take it off. I feel about and my hand strikes sharply against my nose—how clumsy I am!—and then touches my forehead, wrapped in linen. A word grows in my memory, ripens. I grasp it—*bandage*. . . . I have a bandage about my forehead.

I have a bandage about my head and I am in bed. The thick cloud on which I lay was a dream, but the strange atmosphere, neither gray nor red nor black, was not. It is almost dark, but not quite, and indistinct forms appear. What is the meaning of these bars which form a square, here, close to my face? Are they the rungs of a little ladder? I don't know. Two little horizontal bars, joined by a vertical line. Is it an hallucination? I put my hand out to touch them, but I find nothing but space, and my tired hand falls back again. The coldness of the sheet sends a chill through me. I must remember; I try to collect my ideas. But I shall never be able to think of any particular thing if words keep dancing before my eyes.

We are at war, and I have been wounded.

That's the thing I have been looking for. A picture comes next: sand between the trunks of shell-torn pines, a group of men in red trousers,

the strap of a canteen hanging down the wall of a trench.

I hear the sound of steps, so loud that their vibration hurts me. Instinctively a name comes to my lips.

"Lucette!"

"Did you call, Lieutenant?"

It is so difficult for me to speak that I do not answer. To make a sound would cost me an effort of will which would break me in two. I keep silent, close my eyes, and drift off into space.

Once more I open my eyes; there is still this odd light. It is not so dark as the last time. I try to get my bearings, but how disagreeable it is to see things through the wrong end of an opera-glass! Why, that affair of a square and bars is a table! The rungs of the ladder are the two shelves of a table! I laugh to myself over it. And this table is not close to my face, but beside my bed, and so far away that I could not touch it with my hand without moving my body. I raise my hand; I move my fingers before my eyes. That's what is the matter—my sight has gone bad. I see everything too close. And that is not all; something else is wrong with me, I know. What I see is like the proof of a photo-

graph; all the objects seem glued together, and appear the same distance from my eye. I have lost the sense of perspective and relief. I close first one eye and then the other. My eyes are all right, but I must begin to train them over again.

Certainly, my brain has been injured. My sight is not normal; the slightest sounds shake me like thunder, and my muscles do not obey me at once. I try some experiments.

"One, two, three, I am going to double up my fist."

There is a hesitation each time, scarcely perceptible, but I can notice it, and a gleam of anxiety flashes through my mind.

"Shall I succeed? Shall I make myself obey?"

I never talk of all this; I speak as little as possible, for the voices around me rend my ears, and I dread to hear my own, weak, hesitating, strange, with a quality which frightens me. I have said several times, "My wife—have they notified my wife?"

And I repeated: "I am married. I have a child. Their address is in my pocket-book. I beg you to write to them."

The nurse lays her cool hand on mine and says: "Trust us; don't talk, don't tire yourself."

If I insist, she is disturbed and goes for the doctor. Whereupon I say to the doctor: "My mind is clear, quite clear. I beg you to send word to my wife."

He replies: "You have been very ill, my friend, and I am acting for the best. We will talk about it when you are well enough. For the present I can't let you see any one."

I say to the nurse, "At any rate, tell me whether my wife and child are well."

She assures me that they are, but it seems to me with some embarrassment. I suppose they think that the sight of Lucette, or even her handwriting, would give me too much of a shock. They have sent word to her, but have forbidden her to attempt communicating with me. Perhaps they are right; I am still very weak, and the mental balance which I have recovered is very uncertain. And I need all my strength if I am to regain complete control of myself.

I know my room now, and I see it as it is, except for a slight fluttering in the most distant corners. It is a long room, but I have become accustomed to it; not even the singular tint of the wall astonishes me any more, but it is true that all colors seem strange to me now. The

furniture consists of a metallic table with shelves, two chairs, and a straw arm-chair. Beside the door there is a large white card fastened up by four tacks with shiny heads; I wish I could read what is written on this card, but I can't.

Little by little I have succeeded in reconstructing my past, but not without trouble. My recollections are luminous islands between which all is black. By dint of perseverance I call up first one and then another past impression.

The only person to whom I speak a few words is the fat old woman who comes on watch at night. I learn from her that it is the 20th of January, 1915, and that I was wounded on November 23, 1914.

"Hush!" she says. "I am forbidden to speak to you; it excites you."

Nevertheless I succeed in arousing her pity.

"Give me the papers," I beg, "which I had when I arrived. I must have them. I swear to you that they will not do me any harm. On the contrary—"

Thanks to her, I get the package of Lucette's letters. I break the seals which fastened the envelope (I have no recollection of having put them together and making a parcel of them), and I hold in my hands all her letters of September

and October, two of her photographs, and the photographs of the baby.

Every night, with the connivance of the old woman, I take the package close to me and, without her knowing it, while she makes her rounds I turn on the light and read.

I, Jacques Breton, have always been a perfectly sane individual, as all my ancestors were, and it is not a wretched Boche bullet which can have upset my mind. Now I am getting hold of myself more and more. Yet, at times, I have disquieting moments. To-night I looked at my hands, *and my hands frightened me.* I used to have little white half-moons at the base of my nails; Lucette loved them. To-night I suddenly saw on the sheet square nails, without any white in them, and stumpy fingers. It seemed to me that an invisible presence passed behind me, and a great shiver ran over me. Perhaps it is better that I should not communicate with Lucette yet. I resign myself to it because I wish to recover my health completely. Of course I shall recover it.

To occupy the time of my slow resurrection, and by way of exercising my will, I patiently call up the days of my past.

I see again my marriage, and Lucette—that

little Lucette, the friend of my childhood, four years younger than I am; why, I watched her grow up before marrying her. Was there ever a nature more trusting, more tender, more enthusiastic, than hers? Her love for me rose even to veneration.

"What a Calvary it is to be separated from you, my Jacques," she writes in September. "For years there has not been an emotion which we have not felt in common, one close to the other, and as far back as I can recollect I have always shared everything with you."

Our four years of married life, in the pretty southern town where I am director of the electric works; the birth of little Charles at the end of three years; a sequence of quiet, happy, well-filled days. And always Lucette, my Lucette, with her serene smile and her slender grace.

I cannot go on living without her—soon, very soon, I shall feel well enough to insist on her coming, and then—

Bead by bead, like a rosary, I take up her letters. She writes of her most trivial concerns—Charlot has a fever, Charlot was naughty—and she mingles with these homely details memories of the days that are gone; her love cries out from them. Then comes the hovering shadow of war.

I was a lieutenant of infantry; I rejoined my company in Alsace, and I lived with Marcel as in the time of our youth.

Marcel Lauret? Lucette scarcely knows him—they only met once—but I have talked to her so much about him that her letters constantly refer to him. He is twenty-eight years old, an engineer like me, my comrade at the school of electricity at Nancy, my companion in Paris, where we roomed together. He began, like me, in those works in the south where we were both engineers at first, under the orders of the director whose place I took. When I was made director, three months before my marriage, Marcel went to Santander to organize an establishment which he never left till the mobilization, when I found him a sub-lieutenant in my company.

Marcel Lauret, my best friend, my brother in the old days—what has become of him? We shared in the past so many hours of enthusiasm, so many hours of joy! Our evenings around the Master, our afternoons at the concerts, our days of work—they all come back to my memory, so keenly and with so much melancholy, just as we used to recall them in the cantonments, under a drizzling rain, or beside some camp-fire which rose and fell beneath the wind. "Do you re-

member," said Marcel, "that night when the Master said that I would corrupt you?"

Where is that laugh of Marcel's? It rang out under the shell-scarred pines, young, fresh, joyous. Few men are so attractive as Marcel. And how much did the joy of meeting him again lessen for me the horrors of the campaign! Still, Marcel is sometimes sad; he is an orphan, like me, like Lucette—

"No one but you takes any interest in me," he said to me one evening. Lucette, so far away, pitied him. She said in one of her letters:

"I feel sorry for Marcel Lauret, whom I scarcely know, but who is your friend, because he is sometimes sad. I will find him a good wife after the war, and we will see a lot of one another."

Marcel is a handsome fellow, and, having had great success with women, does not believe much in love, at which Lucette grows indignant. My wife's letters remind me of the discussions which Marcel and I used to have in the evenings, tired out, exhausted by the dust. I can see an evacuated village, with packs of dogs in the streets, and the bodies of two Bavarians in the roadway. We had been talking of the war, then of the way the women bear it.

"Few wives have the marvelous courage of yours," said Marcel.

Lucette! When shall I be strong enough for them to let me see you?

What has happened to me is incomprehensible—hallucination? nightmare? One fear obsesses me. I pluck up my courage and ask the good old woman who comes on watch at night:

"Is my face injured by my wound? Am I disfigured, that they never give me a looking-glass?"

She laughs. "Disfigured? Nonsense! They have not given you a glass because you have not asked for one."

"Then give me one, please."

She lays it down beside me and goes away because a patient has rung. I take the little glass, framed in yellow wood, and raise it slowly to the level of my face. I say to myself, "I must be dreadfully aged."

With a cry I throw down the mirror. In the polished glass *I do not see myself;* a strange hallucination causes the face of Marcel to appear—the pale face of a ghost with sunken eyes.

"Do you think I am feverish this evening? I feel queer."

"No, you have no fever."

She is frightened because I am trembling and my teeth are chattering.

"You looked so pale in the glass that it has upset you."

She wishes to take away the glass, but I resist and keep it.

When I am alone I try it over again. . . . This time I *will* put away all illusion. Marcel, very thin, very wasted, Marcel appears again. His head is bandaged like mine and he looks at me with a sort of terror.

Come, Jacques, you are not well yet. You have read Lucette's letters too much, and rummaged among your memories, and thought of Marcel.

With the glass lying on the bedclothes beside me I try to think. I compel myself to count, very slowly, up to a hundred, before looking again. And I decide that I will move before the mirror, this time, in order to make my own reflection appear.

Rueful, bloodless, from the depths of the mirror as if from the depths of some noxious pool, Marcel implores me beneath his bandages. In haste I clumsily raise my finger and touch my cheek. . . . There, opposite me, a hand, with raised forefinger, touches Marcel's cheek.

I shall not succeed in mastering the hallucina-

tion to-day; I am too completely under its control.

What a frightful night! I leave the electric light in the ceiling burning, and I look about me in the hope of recovering a little composure. The room is peaceful—my sight has been normal for several days—I see the white shade which protects the bulb, the table of lacquered iron; on it is a cup decorated with a garland of forget-me-nots. All that is reassuring, familiar. My glance falls upon the large card beside the door. I try to read what is written on it, I sit up in bed, I lean forward. There, distinctly, I distinguish the coarse writing of an orderly, and I read: SUB-LIEUTENANT MARCEL LAURET.

It is like a blow. I fall back on the pillow; I cover my head with the bedclothes, and I lie there, listening to my heart, which beats like the strokes of a hammer.

She was right; I have no fever—and I feel myself terribly clear-headed, with a clearness which frightens me more than anything else conceivable. *I am face to face with something real,* which passes the bounds of my intelligence, but which exists—and I know that I am awake, that I am not dreaming.

Marcel? Where is Marcel now? Is he wounded,

is he dead? I have never believed in the psychic, in the return of phantoms, in spiritual manifestations. Yet, suppose I were mistaken—that he were making me a sign through space, from somewhere beyond?

I hear the ticking of my watch, which mingles with the painful beating of my heart. I pick up the mirror. A blast of terror sweeps over me. An idea is taking form, monstrous, menacing, still indistinct. I writhe, I struggle in my effort to put it away.

"The letters—I will read the letters."

I catch at the past, I reach out my arm to grasp the package. A recollection nails me, motionless, to my pillow. I remember, with an inexorable distinctness, Marcel standing before me, leaning against a pine-tree, forcing into the inside pocket of his blouse the thick envelope containing my letters.

My recollections unroll like a film. I see in the cantonment the rough inn table on which I had wrapped up my letters. I had a fag-end of red wax which did not melt well, and Marcel—I snatch the envelope—yes, here is the green wax which Marcel lent me; the first of the five seals which I broke the other day was half red, half green.

I turn the envelope over and over in my hands. In the left-hand corner I see some words in red ink which had escaped me:

28 November, 1914.

The letters herein are the property of Lieut. Jacques Breton, who intrusted them to me before taking part in an attack. If anything happens to me, send them to Mme. Jacques Breton at . . .

It is signed, "Marcel Lauret."

The dreadful conclusion is forced upon me:

It is certain that I intrusted the package of Lucette's letters to Marcel. It was Marcel, not I, who had these letters on his person on November 22d.

Then what?

I am alone and in despair, like a hare which is chased from refuge to refuge. I will not be caught by the idea which is pursuing me; I would rather sink into nothing—vanish.

If it is true that anguish can whiten the hair, mine ought to have become like snow during those twenty-four hours. *My* hair? Does it mean anything, to me, to say this?

I wrap myself up in the most obstinate silence; I refuse to move, to eat. In spite of myself, yes, in spite of myself, because I was trem-

bling with fear, all the phenomena which accompanied my return to life come back to me. Those eyes which saw things too close, those changed colors, and my ears, oversensitive to sound; my limbs, which would not obey me; those clumsy movements which missed the objects which I strove to touch.

But it is impossible!

At night, when they are all gone, I welcome back the old peasant woman, with her limited intelligence but her pitying heart, who answers me without analyzing my every look. I question her eagerly. She finds me so weak, so strange, that she wishes to keep me silent; besides, they have told her about my sullen silence to-day. But I succeed in touching her:

"I do not talk to them because they take no interest in me, but you—"

She has told me what I wanted to know and what I dreaded so much to hear.

"How did they know my name here? They never asked me for it."

"Asked? Poor thing! you were in no state to answer. I was here when you were brought in at night; there was a little soldier of your company, wounded in the arm. He told your name, and then there were papers in your pocket-book,

the address of that lady whom they notified, your aunt."

"My aunt?"

With amazement, with horror (I have turned my face to the wall, so that she might not see my terror), I learn that a Demoiselle Lauret came from Orleans, recognized in me her nephew Marcel, and begged that they would not trouble her in the future.

"A selfish old thing, who does not care much for you."

By dint of persistence and ingenuity I succeed in learning the story told by the little soldier of the Thirtieth. I find out that as soon as his wound was cured he left the hospital.

Here is what I learned. I will tell it simply, without comment, without being carried away by the dread which has taken possession of me:

On the night of the 22d to the 23d of November, 1914, Sub-Lieutenant Marcel Lauret, who was to have remained at the rear, took part in a patrolling expedition with his lieutenant, whom he loved like a brother.

The lieutenant was severely wounded in the head; Sub-Lieutenant Lauret fell at the same time, and from the position of the two bodies it is probable that the same ball which passed

through the head of one lodged in the brain of the other. They were both carried to an ambulance, where a surgeon trepanned them. The lieutenant died the same night.

The good old woman added:

"The lieutenant did not suffer, you know, and they buried him beside a path. I know this because it was from here, in accordance with the directions given by the little soldier, that they wrote to his wife. It was I who carried the letter to the post-office—Mme. Jacques Breton, somewhere in the south."

"Enough! Enough! Leave me!"

So *Lucette thinks me dead!*

I had an attack of nerves. I cried out, I sobbed. The good old woman, terrified, gave me some orange-flower water to drink. She was frightened and kept repeating:

"Don't tell the doctor that I have talked so much to you; you will get me discharged."

There is no danger of that!

I have just written all that goes before this—they leave me free to write, now that I am rational—and I will go on. I know that no one in the world, not even She, would believe me if I told them the truth. Yet it is the truth. For

all the outside world I have become Marcel Lauret, while I feel that I am so unquestionably myself. I do not explain, I do not seek to explain, a thing which I should refuse to believe if any one told it to me, no matter who. I should say that the person who told me this story was mad, without a moment's hesitation. The doctor, the nurse, the kind old woman who watches at night, my Lucette herself, would label me in this way. Yet I feel clearly that I am not insane. It is terribly difficult to prove it; if I were to try, I should risk frightful persecution; I should be shut up. No, the extraordinary secret is my secret, mine alone. It will remain so.

I was tempted for a moment to write everything to Lucette, to send her these pages. I believe that I even began to write them for her. But would it not be a crime to drag this child to the edge of such a mystery, to plunge her suddenly into something inexplicable? And then, she would not admit for an instant, it is impossible that she should admit— She would take my letter to a doctor, to an alienist. In any case, between her and me—me *whom she would take for Marcel* (I must saturate myself with this idea) —a terror would rise like a wall, and the only

chance which I would have of not losing her would vanish.

For I am planning, I am accustoming myself to this monstrous thing. I say to myself, "They believe that I am Marcel. Very good, I will pretend to be Marcel."

For the love of Jacques, may not Lucette become the friend of Marcel, for whom she would feel pity?

An appalling destiny has thrown me into this blind alley; I will not allow myself to be discouraged; I take up my cards calmly and go on with the game.

To begin with, I write to Lucette, passing myself off as Marcel. I inform her that I have in my possession certain papers which her husband had intrusted to me, papers which I should prefer to deliver into her own hands. I know her; the minute she has a hope of hearing the echo of her husband's last words she will come.

I wait for her. Meanwhile I test my will; I exercise it, I bend it, like a new foil which I do not trust. I learn not to start when I see the face of Marcel in the little mirror with the yellow frame. Once this face used to please me; I admired the fine, clear-cut head, the profile like an antique medal, the soft, almost coaxing

glance. Now that by some incomprehensible witchcraft it is substituted for my own, I hate it. These square, regular teeth, shining in the brown mask, seem to me ferocious—and I execrate this whole being which Lucette cannot love, behind which Lucette can never recognize me.

Marcel is more heavily built than I, and perhaps handsomer in the sense in which women understand it. What does that matter? Did Lucette ever ask if I was handsome? If she were to get me back, what would she care for my lameness, this semi-paralysis which they call a paretic condition? She would be happy in knowing that it would take long to cure, that it would permit me never to leave her again.

My secret! I keep silent for hours while it gnaws at me, hidden in the very bottom of my being. I take a sort of strange pride in being a monster among men who will never suspect it, who will touch elbows with me for years, probably without knowing that everything I say is stage-play. Indeed, I believe it would almost amuse me to go about the world in this way, with a borrowed personality, if it were not for Lucette.

That is what harrows me. I cannot live without her, and I sometimes recoil before the task

which I am about to undertake. Is it not almost sacrilege to try to introduce even the most fervent, the purest of friendships between this woman and him whom she mourns? If I had lost Lucette my heart would have become hardened and fixed in a passionate regret for the days that were no more; it would have become like one of those fossil rocks which nothing can scratch, even, and which yet bear forever the delicate imprint of the tiniest fern-leaf which they once inclosed.

Alas! I know only too well what Lucette's heart is, and how she loved me. I take up her letters again and again, and always there rises from them the same breath of incense. She writes me her thoughts, the memories which come to her, she replies to my questions, she even asks me how I like her letters, "which are the fragrance of her soul," and she consults me about everything.

She is a little ermine, who has remained a child while becoming a woman, and she knows nothing of the world; with no one to guide or sustain her, she must be frightened at every moment, by every problem. A pity comes over me, that of a brother rather than of a lover, and a tender wish to take again this woman's little hand in mine and

lead her, avoiding the rocks and briers in her path.

Ah! Lucette, if—too absorbed in your despair—you do not disdain me at first, how sure I am that your sympathy will fly instinctively to me, as a lost dove returns to its cote.

She will come. She has received my letter. Beneath my new writing, this stiff hand so different from my own, irregular and loose, she did not divine me, but she will come. "My sorrow is stifling me," she writes, "amid the beautiful memories of a life which was so happy."

She will come; the sounds, the light, the warm air which fans my cheeks when my window is open—all these serve only to excite my nerves, wrought up by waiting.

This afternoon I was stretched on my invalid chair, looking at the panorama of slate and tile roofs spread out before me. A light smoke, blown about by the wind, was spreading its gray volutes; it seemed to me that it proclaimed the great miracle of love. The miracle! From every side, this spring day, invisible voices seem whispering to me: "It is impossible, if she sees you often, that she shall not feel the very essence of your personality impress itself upon her. She

will believe herself the prey of an hallucination; she will flee from the obsession, then will seek it, and a day will come when she will cry out, 'Who are you, *you*, who are not He, and are yet so like Him?"

The palms of my hands are burning. I grasp the coarse straw arms of my chair convulsively. As a form in the morning emerges from the mist, so my personality may become clear. Lucette, recognizing it, will utter a sublime cry, and there will be two of us to share the strange secret, as the two of us have shared everything. My blood boils, courses, rushes to my beating temples. . . . I am carried away by my fancy, more than I wish, further than I wish.

The smoke rises, sinks, rolls back upon itself like a piece of cloth, always torn, always reconstructed. It is the same with my insensate imaginings. I call up this existence in which Lucette and I alone would know who I am, and I divine the prodigious savor of the secret, of this fantastic secret which would bind us to each other above the crowd. The intoxication of understanding each other every time that our looks met, and the magnificent pleasure of lying to every one, constantly, and of being honest only with Her who is My Beloved!

And the night overtakes me, overwhelmed by the violence of my dream, and so far away from everything that I start and utter a cry when my nurse, quick and bustling, comes to put me to bed.

I am irritated because to-day, in order to learn again the manners of every-day life, that I may not frighten Lucette, I consented to be present at a concert in the hospital. Why, when they wheeled my chair into the lighted hall, all hung round with garlands, did I feel for a moment an almost animal joy at finding myself alive? Yes, simply at *finding myself alive.* A young nurse raised her bare arms to arrange a lamp; she was laughing and a rosy light shone upon her brow. I had almost forgotten my strange adventure.

II

THE CRAPE VEILS

SHE has come. Never did a watching hunter, never did a sentinel on guard by night have a heart which beat more tumultuously than mine, as I sit up in my invalid's chair, motionless, listening for my adored wife's step in the corridor. A man on trial, perhaps, awaiting the solemn return of the jury, to gather at a glance from the faces of his judges whether they bring him life or death, may have felt as I do.

The silence of my room is broken only by the sound of steam in the radiators, which it shakes with muffled blows. I wait; the delay is unreasonable, interminable. Is it possible that my physical being can stand it? I shall fall back, faint. The dull sound of the water in the pipes seems to grow louder and to overwhelm me.

She is here. I do not know who brought her in, but there she is. Erect, in her crape veil,

she is leaning against the wall and sobbing. It is the first picture of her visit which I retain. She has taken the package of his letters which I tied up so carefully this morning—and she makes me a sign with her hand not to speak to her.

I am there, face to face with her, stupid. I tremble at her despair, and I drink it in at the same time with a savage eagerness. She wipes her eyes, sighs, looks at me without seeing me, and my whole soul goes out to her. At every instant I have the feeling that I might, the moment before, have made the gesture which I should have made, and that now it is hopelessly too late.

At the same time, I look at her, I pity her and I pity myself. She has sat down, and we are weeping together. I see, shining on her face, the love which she had for me, and her infinite grief. It is a dazzling joy and an agony.

She speaks to me, poor little broken sentences which would be insipid if it were not for the magnificent radiance of her tear-filled eyes. I do not even know what she has said to me. It was not to me that she spoke, and her words mattered nothing to me. I was devouring her face, and the emotion which spread over her features a mask of woe.

"So you were the last who saw him, who spoke to him?"

This cry bursts from the very depths of her being and agitates me profoundly; the person whom she sees before her evidently does not exist for her, is only a sort of living relic which has touched Jacques. There was no one for her in the universe but Jacques, and she thinks that Jacques is no more.

This evening, looking at the blue roofs mingled with the red, I feel drunk from having taken too strong a wine. I know that my beloved mourns me as one would mourn a god. I know that *she did not even look at* the handsome face of this Marcel Lauret who won the love of women. But this is unconscious; I am only emotion, perturbation, tenderness, with the burning regret for a whole past which cannot rise again from the grave.

March, 1915 (the next day, Tuesday).

I am depressed to-day by a heavy sadness. Lucette has come back, but she has brought Aunt Martine, with whom she and Charlot are staying. Can it be that every time I find myself with some one who used to know me I shall feel the despair of an animal caught in a trap, which longs to cry out and cannot? Aunt Martine,

short, round, and fat, flew to me in tears and called me "My good, my dear Monsieur Lauret."

I felt the terror of a man who thinks himself the victim of a nightmare and finds that he is wide awake and that his suffering is real. Aunt Martine had met Marcel several times, and thinks she recognizes him, as Lucette does. And she speaks of me in the past tense, also like Lucette.

I sat there with them for an hour; Lucette's pale face, lighted by an inward flame, stood out against the black crape of her veil. My poor darling! She rebelled, she stamped on the floor under the influence of a grief which, in its excess, finds vent in outward manifestations, and she cried:

"It is too unjust that Jacques should have died!"

The fervor of her tone touched me; I should have liked to kneel at her feet and thank her. At the same time an icy coldness spread through the tiniest ramifications of my veins at the horror of being thus in the presence of her who did not see me. And this horror was increased by the commonplace presence of Aunt Martine, whose talk brought me back to a trivial existence in the midst of which it was almost impossible to believe in my adventure.

Aunt Martine had been a mother to me from the time I was sixteen; Aunt Martine adored me, and her grief is great; but Aunt Martine thought she knew me, and insists on talking about me.

Aunt Martine talked about me, and Lucette answered her. They kept praising me to my face, forward and back, like a litany. I would have given anything to get away and not hear them, because it tortured me to feel that their praise would apply to any man whom they dearly loved, no matter how different he was from me. From all this string of superlatives I could pick out nothing which belonged peculiarly to me; they credited me with every good quality of body, mind, and heart: "He was so kind." "So intelligent." "So remarkable."

No, the repetition of a catalogue of abstract qualities does not in the least describe me. Lucette's love, her grief, are visible, almost tangible, in her every movement, but her words are so little descriptive that in the end I come to wish, with a sort of rage, that she would keep still. And I cannot express my relief when she went to the window to weep in silence.

Aunt Martine was weeping, too. She reminded us of the congestion of the lungs which I had at her house when I was nineteen.

"To think that I took such good care of him and cured him, and now they have killed him."

She reached the sublime in recalling the veriest trifles; I could taste in my mouth the flavor of that drink of apple-juice, cool and acid, which she made herself. I could remember the little night-lamp with its pink globe which I liked to have by my bed even in the daytime.

"My poor Jacques. I can see the lock of hair which stood up straight on his forehead. And he used to make faces when I brushed it."

She remembered all my likes, my acts, my words. But she will never say a thing which will let me hope that she will divine my identity from anything but a cowlick. a mole on my temple, or a scar on my wrist.

And Lucette! Ah! what a taste of ashes is in my mouth this evening.

Lucette came back alone. Her steps mechanically brought her to me, because with me she can give way to her sorrow: she felt that from the outset.

She asked me to tell her our adventures in the war. It was a sore trial for me. I had to clench my fists that I might not say to her, "I kept thinking of you constantly, at the edge of that

shell-torn wood. Don't you feel that I am Jacques?"

She listened to me with strained attention. Every little while she would put out her hand as if to lay it on my arm and say:

"Was Jacques there, too?"

At last she took pity on my weariness and told me to rest, and I sat there beside her, silent. I felt imprisoned in a solitude more frightful than the most horrible of prisons.

Friday.

She brought Charlot to see me—Charlot, who is eighteen months old, who clung to her neck and drew back frightened when I came close to him. Charlot, the son of my flesh. I am so stupefied to-night that I can scarcely write.

Lucette announced to me to-day that she is going to live in Paris. She will leave Charlot with Aunt Martine while she brings up her luggage and makes arrangements "down there."

She said to me:

"I decided this some time ago, but I had to arrange with my aunt. I cannot live there without Jacques, where everything speaks to me of him incessantly. It is too dreadful."

I felt bitterly vexed that she should leave our house. It did not seem to me worthy of her to

run away from her sorrow. Besides, the tone of that "I decided" cut me to the heart. It seemed to imply a certain pride in having to decide for herself, a certain desire to make use of her liberty, as of a new tool. Why does she act like a little plant which has been forced to run along the ground, and which, when the fastenings are removed, frees itself and stands upright? I never had the slightest desire to dominate her; we always decided on everything together.

Never mind. She will continue to come here every day; she has promised Madame Nord, the head nurse, to serve the lunch and the afternoon tisane, and when she comes back she will have the right to go about in the white blouse with the head-dress and the red cross.

"I do not want to be useless," she said, with a movement of the head in which I recognize my child-wife of old.

Lucette, child; yes, child! You need some one to counsel and support you more than you imagine.

March, 1915. Wednesday.

The desire to see the Master obsessed me, and I got some one to write to him that Marcel Lauret was here and begged for a visit from him.

The Master! If Lucette is the love of my life,

he is the enthusiasm. It seems to me that to be with him again, to return to the dear laboratory where we worked so hard—Marcel, I, and the others of whom so many are dead—would be to recover the well-spring of my mental activity.

I was the favorite disciple, as Marcel used to say—Marcel, toward whom the Master was, on the whole, unjust and ill-disposed. For the Master did not measure me, as Aunt Martine did, by the way my hair grew or by my fads. Will the essence of my being be able to shine through the matter which incloses it, so that he and Lucette may be able to perceive it?

Sunday.

The Master came. I saw once more the pale, ascetic face beneath the bristling hair and the great eyes of one inspired. I watched for his first look. His first look said to me, "Alas! why must it be Marcel who is alive and Jacques who is gone?"

And I recollected that the Master was not fond of Marcel, whom he reproved for his frivolity, his eternal love of worldly amusements, and his lack of morals.

This first glance chilled me. I was accustomed to find in the Master's eyes so much friendliness,

such indulgent affection! Tears came to my eyes, and I held out my hands.

"Ah! I need you so much, to give me strength."

A faint look of astonishment passed over his face, for Marcel would not have said this. He took my hand:

"My poor friend, you must have strength. Those who remain will have to do the work of those who are gone. Our poor Jacques!"

For the second time I saw the very face of the grief born of my loss. I waited for the Master to say something more. I hoped for the funeral eulogy which would paint me as he had known me, as he keeps me in his heart. I remained silent, eager for the words which should come, torn by an anxiety which seemed to have emptied my body of everything inside it, leaving me nothing but an exasperated attention.

But the Master asked me what I thought about the war, and I talked.

How precious this conversation would have been if I had not been stifled behind this mask which is my face. Did I not forget, once in a while, that the Master did not recognize me?

A Thursday at the end of April.

She has come back. I taste every day the

simple joy of her presence. She is there. Her every posture awakens in me a delicate feeling of perfect beauty. I look at her profile, silhouetted against the white veil. Her slender neck rises from the low-cut blouse; her hands are busy with a piece of knitting. She is there, she need not speak to me; I even prefer that she should not.

When the bell in the corridor rings she rises so quickly and gracefully that I marvel each time. She lays down her work and glides out; a certain holy joy lights her face when she returns. She loves to give herself, to serve.

The window is open. A couple of pansies in a glass vase brighten the iron table. I am wrapped in a rug and my tired hands lie idle. Lucette glances at me from time to time. It is not the submissive, imploring look which she had awhile ago; from the expression of her eyes I see that she regards me as a stranger. She is anxious as to whether I am cold, whether she had better close the window, whether she had better leave me alone, so that I may go to sleep.

As soon as she becomes absorbed in her knitting I watch her hungrily. I wonder what she is thinking about. Her head droops; she has lost color like a rose after a shower; there is a pearly

line beneath her eyelids. It is evident that she weeps a great deal. But how strongly does my memory hold possession of her heart? Is it certain—as I thought at first—that her soul has been so dried up by the fire of despair as to be incapable of being moved by anything which does not concern her and me?

She mingles the memories of our past with her daily life in the most touching way. A nurse brought me a little chess-board, one of those that they use on ocean voyages, which have little holes in which to insert the pieces. Lucette took it in her hands:

"Jacques and I played with a board like that one evening in Holland."

The sight of an anemone reminds her of the garden; a heavy thunderstorm reminds her of a trip which we took in the Moorish Mountains. I admire the manner in which she interweaves her memories with the present, as one might make a garland of roses and ivy. And her recollections fill my soul with delight. Each time it is like raising a corner of the veil which covers our past. But, alas! I want her to tell me more; I am not satisfied with these short little phrases. I beg her to fill out a story; I press her with nervous questioning, and I lay traps for her:

"Did Jacques like this? Did Jacques like that?"

Certainly, it were better if she did not talk to me at all. As soon as she speaks, I want it to be of me, and then I am in despair over the triviality of what she says. Why must I always spoil my first impression, which is exquisite? Every time that something has caused her to call up our past I have been happy; then why do I insist upon details?

Friday evening.

This afternoon I fell into a sort of rage. I determined that, though she recognized neither my voice nor my face, Lucette should nevertheless recognize me. How? Human souls are not communicable—I see that only too clearly. They cannot reveal their essence by any perfume which they give off, like a lilac-bush at night. There are only words, imperfect, awkward, which deceive.

Lucette had laid aside her knitting. She was so touching, so pure, so sad, that a wave swept me away. I said:

"Oh, talk to me, I beg of you; talk to me of Jacques. Tell me what books he liked."

She turned quickly—she does not like this sort of question. Is it fear of profanation? is it simple

timidity? — and she shot my question back at me:

"Tell me what books you like yourself."

Then I was seized with madness. I fancied that by lame, elementary indications of literary or poetical tastes I could stir Lucette, give her a presentiment of the enigma. I repeated the conversations which we had had a hundred times during our years together; I ransacked my memory; I enunciated, pell-mell, criticisms, tastes. The words which I used seemed to me so colorless, so false. I may even say that the ideas, when it came to expressing the very substance of my being, seemed terribly crude. I felt myself filled with inexpressible, unformulated aspirations; yearnings sprang up within me, only to melt away as soon as I tried to mold them into words.

Lucette listened to me sweetly, but I think that I frightened her—oh, she was a thousand miles from suspecting the drama—and she saw that I was dangerously excited. She tried to stop me several times. She said that I had very much the same opinions as Jacques, and I felt myself more walled in than ever in my borrowed personality.

Lucette, I saw our past existence as a marvel-

ous symphony of which I should have to play you only a few chords in order to make you vibrate; but I am the sorriest of musicians, and perhaps if I succeeded in playing the theme of our years of happiness, perhaps, Lucette, you would not recognize it.

I sit here, in my dismal room, looking at the roofs which grow blue as evening comes on. I wonder what Lucette has thought. She may have imagined that I have repeated, to interest her, fragments of conversation which I had had with Jacques. Did she even recognize these fragments?

Ideas take form within me, group themselves, disperse, like the cloudlets of smoke which I see rolling before me, above the gray and rose-colored chimneys. I recollect Lucette's letters, which filled me with enthusiasm. Letters! Is there anything more misleading than letters? Did not Lucette write to be agreeable to her correspondent, above everything else? How could she tell me her thoughts when she does not know how to state with the slightest precision the smallest abstract idea? Her thoughts! It suddenly occurs to me that they were my thoughts which she sent back to me. I fancy that she sent them back without assimilating them; that she

sent them back like an attentive little mirror which has nothing but tinfoil behind its glass, tinfoil on which no image could impress itself.

Heavens! If she recognized me she would again take pains to use the language which I might prefer. She would adopt the form of my ideas, my enthusiasms. I should not perceive how little she understood.

But the structure which I have been raising in my mind falls down because I know that Lucette is honest. And then a new cloud floats in, takes form for an instant as a distinct idea. Lucette was honest; she adopted my enthusiasms without seeking to understand them; she accepted them without finding out in the least what they meant. But she accepted them. If I had changed from day to day, she would have changed, too, and probably would not have perceived it. And now she would be utterly incapable of explaining them, and I am troubling her to no purpose.

Poor child! You loved me deeply; you suffer at having lost me, and I suffer at being separated from you! And here I am, exhausting myself in fanciful speculations.

May 6, 1915.

She leaned her brow against the glass in my

window; she looked into the courtyard of the hospital and cried:

"If I could only see Jacques walk by as I have seen that officer! What an immense happiness it would be for me, even if he did not see me! What I miss more than anything else is the sight of his face, the way that he moved."

I felt my mouth grow dry. I said: "I imagine that what you miss most is your life together, the community of your interests. If you saw Jacques pass and he did not come to you you would be miserable."

She turned toward me; never have I seen more clearly on her face the reflection of her despairing love.

"I swear to you," she said, "that what torments me is the certainty that never again shall I see his smile, the way he used to light his cigarette. I shall meet hundreds, thousands of men—no one, ever again, will be he. It is frightful!"

Then I understood. What she loved in me—was it only a blond mustache, blue eyes, the way I walked, the collection of molecules which, they say, is disintegrating somewhere in Alsace beneath a wooden cross? What she misses nobody in the world can give back to her, and what

I could give back to her she would scarcely care for.

And I realize that I have reached the cruelest part of my Calvary. I begin to realize that my real personality can interest nobody in the world but myself; to every one else, to Lucette, to the Master, I am only a collection of external appearances, which strike the senses of sight and hearing, and perhaps also the secret sympathetic chords which cause people to like or dislike me. But my personality counts only through the tangible acts which it inspires.

May 7th.

I did not sleep at all. I watched the light in the ceiling and asked myself:

"How about me? Are not the things which I chiefly love in Lucette the pools of light which are her eyes, and the curves of her swan-like neck?"

May 7th, evening.

For several days it has been settled that I might go out for a drive, with a companion. This morning I felt so strongly the need of seeing the Master that I begged Madame Nord to take me to the laboratory. Is it possible that every one, even the Master, has seen me *only from the outside*, and the fact that I am really Jacques means

nothing to any one, so long as I have neither the body nor the face which formerly sheltered my soul—can I use any other word than that? And does the persistence of my memory, my intelligence, my affections, mean only that I shall always be a monster, cast out from our common humanity, and who would do better to disappear?

I was torn by such inward torments that all realities seemed to me non-existent. I allowed myself to be dressed and taken down-stairs with a single idea burning in me and allowing nothing to exist beside itself. But suddenly, when I was stretched out beside Madame Nord in the carriage, I perceived the sweet, sugary odor of acacia blossoms. At the same time I felt pleasure at being in the open air, and a sort of joyousness caused my heart to beat; it seemed to me that I was bounding with the rhythm of the wheels, and that I was breathing with new lungs. . . . I felt lifted toward the blue of the heavens shining above the green trees along the boulevard. . . . I had a vague desire to stretch myself like a cat, to find a cool spring and drink of it, and then to wander on a mountain. . . .

There was a succession of impressions, aspirations, which succeeded one another within me

and left me worn out, overcome by a sort of mental languor. Through an opaque atmosphere I heard Madame Nord talking.

Madame Nord has a peremptory voice, and thinks there is no pleasure in the world but organizing and commanding. Tall, thin, and dried-up, she considers all human affections, all personal interests as temptations which must be overcome. She likes the nurses in her service to be free from all family ties.

"If the husbands are wounded or the children ill, they stop work."

She asked me if I thought that Madame Breton would have the strength to master her sorrow and become "an efficient personality"; she told me that she had good hopes of it.

"Madame Breton is really a child; she leaned entirely on her husband."

I was filled with irritation, angry with this woman who designed to take possession of Lucette's mind, to mold her into her own image. I saw sitting beside me a sort of harpy with the beak of an eagle who wished to tear out Lucette's youth and charm. The thought of the Master and of my own anguish vanished, and I felt only a furious desire to protect Lucette, to save her from being transformed, changed, swallowed up.

The laboratory, with its porte-cochère and its crooked staircase at the end of the little court, rose suddenly before us. Madame Nord supported me by the arm, and the Master came to us in the tiled antechamber.

"Ah! Lauret, it is you."

I have become of an exaggerated sensibility; the smallest intonations of the human voice are prolonged in me with infinite reverberations; the Master's voice seemed to me to have recovered its old-time quality, and no longer to have the abruptness of tone with which he used to address Marcel.

Madame Nord promised to come back for me, and went away.

Supported by the Master, I passed through the narrow corridor and found myself in the office. There, from every wall, memories pressed upon me, and I felt myself welded to my past with terrible strength. The cases filled with books, the scales on the dusty shelves, the bell-mouthed glasses before the windows, all recalled the old days.

"Can I go to the Capharnaum?" [1]

The Master hesitated perceptibly. "The

[1] A Capharnaum is a sort of storeroom, lumber-room, etc., used for all sorts of odd purposes.

Capharnaum is filled with disconnected machinery; in fact, it is closed for the present."

My desire to go there was so great that I was trembling. "For Jacques' sake, let me just look into it."

"Poor Jacques!" said the Master. "He worked there a long time. Come as far as the spare room; I can't take you farther to-day."

We went through the labyrinth of passages. I scarcely dragged my leg at all.

"The step is broken here, isn't it? And one must press the lower part in order to open the door."

"You surprise me, Lauret," said the Master. "You rarely came to this part of the laboratory. You had left when Jacques spent his time here."

I felt like leaping, drunk with inward joy.

"Look out!" cried the Master.

I had struck my forehead sharply on the low door of the Capharnaum. I paused in surprise.

"But formerly—"

"You hit your head," said the Master. "You came here two or three times, and you hit your head, as I do if I am not careful. *Jacques could just pass through.*"

Ah! what disappointment!

Nevertheless, I feel comforted this evening.

But why would he not let me go into the rooms at the back? And would he have let me go if he had known me?

May, 1915.

Madame Nord plants herself here too often when Lucette is with me. Her thin face seems to me full of hostility. She is a fanatic. Madame Hamel swells with a complacent sense of the importance of women. Between them they are transforming Lucette, and it makes me suffer.

Why does Lucette give herself up to these new influences, like a branch in a running stream? How can her little soul change its appearance like a sheet of water which the wind disturbs, tears, and deforms, and which, according to circumstances, can either hurl itself on the rocks or spread out in a motionless sheet? Sometimes it seems to me that all this is unconsciously directed against me; she feels, by some mysterious antennæ, that I mean to know her, perhaps to rule her, and she becomes angry and rebels. And I would swear that sometimes she would rather tell any lie than say what I want her to say. Then I am filled with a furious desire to dominate her.

To-day she brought Charlot to see me, and announced that she had engaged an English

nurse whom Madame Hamel had recommended. I have always expressed my aversion to the system which consists in mixing up several languages in children's brains. Lucette knows it; I felt irritated when I saw that she cared nothing for my views.

"The boy will chatter English at the same time that he does French," she said. "I have always wanted him to know English early."

"Did Jacques want it, too?" I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders slightly. "Jacques and I *always* agreed."

I felt that if I did not want her to escape I *must* secure the nurse's discharge. Formerly, when I was a Jacques who did not know, I would have given explanations, gone into my reasons. I know now that the important thing is to touch her feminine sensibility. I said in an indifferent, but too curt a tone:

"It seems to me that I have heard Jacques say that he disapproved of this method of learning foreign languages so young. Would you wish, in educating your son, to go counter to the wishes of your husband who is dead?"

She started, as I wished; she hid her face in Charlot's curls and wept.

"It is not true that by a little detail like this

I show a lack of respect for Jacques' memory. I am so unhappy, and all well-brought-up babies prattle English."

I was pitiless. I replied: "Yes. That is Madame Hamel's opinion."

This new fashion of talking exasperated me. "Prattle," "Well-brought-up babies," I recognized in them phrases learned in long conversations with Madame Hamel.

Lucette had risen; she pressed Charlot to her breast.

"Don't look at me like that. You frighten me. I promise to dismiss the English girl, but don't speak to me so severely, I beg of you."

I am ashamed of having made her weep, and at the same time there arises in me a faint sense of victory, a feeling which astonishes me; in the old days I never once felt pleasure in making Lucette's will bend before my own.

June, 1915.

It is strange that I think so little about the war. I take an interest in it because I wish to take an interest in it, but my soul scarcely vibrates, like the bell of an alarm-clock which has been stuffed with cotton to deaden it. I

read the despatches and I talk about them, but no real emotion thrills me, and I feel ashamed of myself.

So far as concerns everything which is not related to my strange adventure, my sensibilities seem chloroformed. All the emotional power which I possess is concentrated on Lucette. The desire to know what she is thinking about pursues me continually. It is a burning thirst which no words of hers can assuage.

She comes and goes, and I delight in her presence, but it does not satisfy me. No desire for love touches me, even lightly; what I wish is to read in her heart, to divine the movements of her thought—in short, to find her once more as I knew her. I wish her to remain like the picture of her which I have in my mind, and I am unhappy beyond expression if any word or gesture of hers alters this picture.

This afternoon we drove together to the Bois, for Lucette takes her patient out once a week. We were going up toward the Arc de Triomphe through that Avenue des Champs-Elysées which is beyond doubt the most beautiful in the world, and which seems to symbolize the delicate beauty of Paris. I suddenly thought, "They came near marching down here," and suddenly, with a

great wave, the enthusiasm which had been missing since my resurrection came back to me. Instantly I wanted to awaken in Lucette an enthusiasm like my own, and I was seized with the desire to find in her that patriotic fiber which gave me such pleasure in her letters. I reminded her that the brutes had hoped to march to the sound of brass bands between the lines of chestnut-trees. I murmured:

"Was it not worth the bloody sacrifices that they should not trample on our city, that they should not destroy our civilization?"

She turned toward me. I was watching for a flame in her great eyes; I divined beforehand what would be the expression of her face. I often have a passionate desire to mold her features, to sculpture them, so to speak, by the words which I utter. In the past her face used to change in this way, as if to reflect my thoughts. I could fill her eyes with tears, make her pupils dilate, bring a rosy light to the delicate skin of her cheeks. I paid no attention to it; I did not know it; I thought that she existed outside of me and that a simple and marvelous coincidence caused our hearts to beat in unison. Now I tortured myself in the hope of again reaching this mysterious harmony.

To-day I watched anxiously for the face of a Lucette unhappy, but standing the strain bravely, like a young warrior. Beneath the black veil I saw only the reproachful look of a young creature who clenched her teeth on her selfishness. Her face had hardened and become hostile to me. Finally she said, curtly:

"For me nothing in the world is worth the death of Jacques."

I was filled with rage. I remembered so many noble phrases, such vehement protestations in favor of sacrifices for the country. I seized the slender wrist which lay on the dark skirt.

"You do not think that—it is impossible that you should think it. Jacques told me."

I wished to force her to live again as I had known her on the burning evening of the mobilization. I could see her, sobbing and magnificent, crying, "If we must both die, you from a ball and I from despair, it will not matter if we are victors." I wished to see her again like that. I wished it so much that I felt myself waiting in suspense.

She freed her hand. "Formerly I worried about many things when only one mattered—to be with Jacques, to see, to live with him."

The bitter curve of her mouth wounded me

like an insult. I am thirsty for her regrets and the evidences of the love which she bore me, but I intend to choose their kind and manner. She had become calm, and looked about her.

"All that, you see," she went on, more quietly, "was only words. I did not think it possible that he should be killed; I did not want him to be. I could accomplish any heroism, any sacrifice, so long as one being was unharmed. Now Jacques is dead, nothing else matters."

The tone in which she spoke, the determined manner in which she expressed herself, seemed to make of her a woman whom I did not know—more mature, more poised, more selfish than my Lucette. I suffered because of it. She changed the conversation.

"See how lovely the light is," she said, pointing to the golden haze which encircled the Arch.

Then a thought shot through me, sharp as the blow of a dagger. I was irritated because she could notice the beauty of a summer afternoon at the very moment when she said that nothing in the world existed for her. I was as angry with her as though she had been guilty of a shameful hypocrisy.

"Once she wanted to die if I died, and felt herself ready to offer up both of us as a sacrifice

for France. Now she complains because her accustomed companion is not with her, but nevertheless desires to live and enjoy the simple little joys of every day."

She threw back her head in the shade of her umbrella. I saw suddenly that she had lost the pallor of the first months, that delicate look like a rose withered by a shower. I seemed to feel the blood coursing redder and more freely in her veins.

There are moments when it seems to me that she is my enemy and that she hurts me frightfully.

June 28, 1915.

I am walking better and better, they say—that is, when I move about leaning on a crutch-stick the ball-and-chain which is my leg drags a little less heavily. Aunt Martine and Lucette got leave for me to go and spend the afternoon in the apartment on the Avenue Carnot. I have a bitter and unpleasant recollection of my day.

Why did I accept? I am in the distracted condition of an insect which sees the verdure through a pane of glass against which it wears itself out without ever being able to pass through the obstacle. Accursed be this body which ought to be a docile implement for me, and

which, because men are blind, makes of me a pariah!

It is only the Master who seems sometimes to speak to my real self, inside the visible envelope. At the laboratory my torment sometimes is soothed. Nevertheless—

Yes, in the presence of the Master, too, I suffer from being painfully recalled to reality. I am profoundly unhappy because he refuses to let me into the two rooms which I knew so well, where I know that he works with his young lame pupil at some mysterious war invention. I know the confidence which he would have in me if he knew me, and his reserve, masked by kindliness, pains and wounds me every time that I observe it. The transparent wall, invisible to every one, rises before me, and I learn painfully, by another bruise, that I am outside of my existence.

The last time I had seen the Master he had given me a mounting to make. I was standing in one of the rooms on the ground floor. As I handled the pieces of glass, ebony, and metal an old delight blossomed again within me. Once more I felt the joy of conquering difficulties, small difficulties, which one will solve one after another, which one will disentangle as one un-

ravels a tangled skein. And a melody rose to my lips.

Suddenly a shadow cut off the light. I raised my head and saw the Master. He was watching me, hands crossed behind his back.

"It is strange," he said to me, in his rough voice, with such distinct articulation that he seemed to cut his words out of metal—"you go at this work as Jacques would have done; I did not remember that your method was so like his. It is extraordinary, the influence which he exercised over you. You have caught even the airs which he sang."

The laboratory seemed to me filled with a tragic atmosphere. I felt suffocated with emotion, a glass tube broke in my hand, and I looked wildly at the pieces which I had laid on the table. A mad hope filled my heart with a tumultuous beating of wings.

"Perhaps," said the Master, "you might—"

He stopped. I understood that he had been on the point of taking me into the secret machines which are being constructed back there in the Capharnaum. Then the resolution not to bring me into his investigations had stifled his impulse. I ventured to look at him again. I read in his eyes an affectionate, hesitating curi-

osity. I perceived that a struggle was going on within him between the old picture of Marcel Lauret which he had in his mind and the new one which, little by little, was taking its place. In the Master's judgment, Marcel Lauret, brilliant and frivolous, had not the unselfish enthusiasm which alone can open the doors of the temple of science. He thought that Marcel cared too much for the easily won pleasures of life, valued too highly his successes with women, enunciated moral theories which were selfish and dangerous. Marcel Lauret had, in fact, always been displeasing to him. And now he was astonished to find himself inwardly drawn toward him.

I turned about to hide the joy which filled me. A first ray of light, though still very feeble, was penetrating into my cell.

That night, as I came back from the laboratory, under the talkative protection of Madame Hamel, I watched the wind as it roughly tossed the trees in the boulevard. The sky, between the clouds, made pools of light. It seemed to me that I was beginning to shake off the bonds which oppressed me, that I was at last going to find the solution.

I had a confused idea that peace lay in scien-

tific work. By the Master's side, far from all uncertainties, to forget that Lucette was still alive, and to live as though I were only a spirit.

"I am only a spirit," I thought. "We are all only spirits. My present body is an accident; the one before it was one, too. It is absurd to wish to assert my continuity by concerning myself about a woman whom I thought I knew, yet of whose essential nature perhaps I know but little. My continuity will lie in the creative effort of my intelligence."

I was thinking this when, just as before when I had been with Madame Nord, the perfume of the acacias in blossom assailed me, seeming to pour into my heart waves of sweetish languor; and all through that part of the boulevard which is planted with acacias instead of chestnuts I recalled Lucette with the keen consciousness that it was impossible for me to live without her.

And so when I arrived at the hospital all the exaltation born of the Master's words had died down. I had the disappointment of learning that Lucette had left after lunch had been served, and I went to bed displeased and irritated.

Irritated? Less than this evening. Why did I find the few hours which I spent at Aunt Martine's handsome apartment so unpleasant?

Is it because I hate to find myself, changed, in surroundings which were familiar to me? Is it because I met two or three people who knew me as a child and it is always horrible to me to be taken for some one else? Is it because of these ladies' conversation?

It was hateful for me to see Lucette, with bare head, graceful in some stuff less stiff than crape, draping herself in her sorrow in the presence of Madame Nord, Madame Hamel. Yes, it seemed to me that her grief had become a garment, and I suffered from it as though she had betrayed me.

She was beautiful, and the same feeling came back to me which I had the other day, the feeling that she was recovering too much beauty, too much vitality, that she retains the envelope of her grief, but that her grief itself is slowly disappearing.

She was standing, offering a cup of tea to an old lady. I looked at her hair, coiled on the back of her neck. I listened to her voice, and an absurd comparison obsessed me. I kept repeating to myself: "There are caterpillars which move about alive and in them another insect lives and is developing. They appear to be still themselves, and yet are only the dwelling of

another being. Lucette has not changed physically. I have another body, and yet I have remained myself more than she has—yes, more than she."

Everything that she said annoyed me. Why has she taken the habit of stating opinions in such a positive way—she who was silent with everybody but me? Why does she behave like a little girl who has suddenly gained a new dignity and makes a display of it? Does she think that as a wife she had no right to her private opinions, while as a young widow she ought to develop herself and exhibit an independent personality? Does she not see how ridiculous are all these phrases, "I consider" and "It seems to me"?

Lying back in an arm-chair, a victim to Aunt Martine's questions, I felt a growing anger and a desire to take hold of that little head, to bend it down beneath my hand, and to cry out:

"You shall remain what you were. You shall not escape from my influence. I will not permit your personality to disappear."

And then a little incident of another kind came to disturb me, as the prelude to a threatening danger.

Aunt Martine had taken a cup of dates filled

with pistache. It is a delicacy which I used to abhor. Intent on Lucette, who, with head raised toward Madame Hamel, was listening submissively to her, I took one of the bonbons and ate it. When I came to myself I could not help saying:

"Do you know, it is delicious? It is not the same at all."

Aunt Martine smiled with her whole fat, kindly face. "Nonsense, Lauret; they are the same, and you were crazy about them when you used to come here as a student with Jacques."

Then, in the middle of that large *salon*, two steps from the chatter of Lucette and Madame Hamel, I was seized by the chill of a nightmare.

But the truth is that it was Lucette who displeased me; it displeased me to have her come to me, gentle and almost languishing, and to have her look at me in a way which seemed to ask if I was noticing her. With that hyperesthesia which renders my sight more acute, my intuitions more rapid, I had a feeling, which was atrociously painful, that she wished me to admire her. Yes, I thought that I felt a sort of immaterial, acute appeal, which shot from under her swiftly raised eyelids.

And as I was morose, did not her curiosity follow me with exasperating solicitude?

"Jacques is dead; nothing matters." Really, Madame?

Midnight.

Everything is asleep. A few minutes ago I was watching the moon spread its cold radiance over the roofs. Seated on my bed, I watched the clouds passing over the planet, and veiling it with their gray crape; pools of light seemed to tremble on zinc inclines and the rows of brick chimneys stood out distinctly. A poetic feeling exhaled from it all; the deep and indefinable emotion which is caused on a summer night by the sight and the sound of the sea enveloped me little by little in its rise and fall. The clouds rolled along like waves; their broken masses bore me down, then swept me away in their current. I was panting, as if pursuing a fantastic chimera, and my grief grew heavier and heavier. I felt it materialized in my vitals, tearing me with an unceasing pain. I finally rose and turned on the light.

Must I confess that it hurts me to have Lucette follow an evolution in which I have no share?

Our past? I see it so brilliant, so beautiful,

shining on the shore from which we move farther and farther away every day. I stretch out my hands to it, I long to return to it, to bring back Lucette. I cannot have Lucette change, cease to be what she has been. It is not enough for me that she piously preserves the memory of the bygone days; I want her to be what she was when she lived them, and to live them over with me.

It would matter little to me now if she knew clearly, consciously, that I am Jacques. What I want is for my spirit to fill her as of old, master her, dictate to her her thoughts, her feelings. I laugh at my former folly—in the days when I flattered myself that I was a husband who respected his wife's individuality—as if the brightest part of my happiness had not always been this hold of my consciousness over another consciousness. Lucette, a tender and delicate parasitic flower, lived off of me. It was I who transformed everything into thoughts, emotions, sentiments. The little parasitic flower withered, and now, adapting itself to solitude, it is beginning to plant its roots directly in the soil and aspires to build its own substance.

I writhe in rebellion. I am determined that we shall once more be only one, that our life

together shall be again what it was. That was what our love consisted of. No debasing physical passion ever intruded between the pure little Lucette and me. She belonged to me through tenderness, confidence; the essential part of our affection was that mysterious communion which I never understood as I understand it now, and which shines through all my memories, and which was so evident when I read her dear letters!

My Lucette! To think that a few weeks ago I was mad enough to reproach you even for the way in which you comprehended things through my intelligence, without reflection, without effort. You took the color of my soul, like that strange animal of hot countries which changes itself instinctively by turns to the green of the prairies or the brown of the desert. My childish stupidity was such that I did not rejoice in this marvelous adaptability. We both saw in it the simple effect of the evolution of two parallel consciousnesses.

June 29th.

The object is before me, so clear that a great void seems to have grown within my consciousness. I know that I must make myself loved by Lucette to the point of becoming her husband again. From my head to my feet, I have the

physical sensation of being nothing but will; my nerves seem tense like springs of steel, and I feel strong with an invincible strength. There is no more agitation nor despair; a heavy calm oppresses me, as when the wind falls suddenly on burning summer afternoons and the sails of ships hang dead. I am alone in the midst of all exterior influences; neither light nor form has any influence on me, where last night the smallest physical manifestation aroused in me a confused whirlwind of longings and sorrows.

I will make myself loved by Lucette, who takes me for Marcel. I will make myself loved by her, no matter what the means, but I will make myself loved by her. I felt the awakening in her of a new need of being loved, of being no longer immured in her sorrow. I will know how to benefit by her unconscious appeal; I will watch her. I do not care how I accomplish it, so long as she loves me. And when she loves me—

Oh! when she loves me, when once more her eyes look into mine; when her spirit trembles, mastered by mine; when, as in the past, we know the intoxication of being moved at the same moment by the same sight, then will not the world stand still before my happiness?

I lie here, in my room with the varnished

walls, a poor wounded man, still almost crippled, and I feel like a knight ready for battle. Armed, resolute, I thrill on the threshold of the terrible adventure. I have no idea of crossing seas or fighting dragons; no, I am going back into the shadows of the past to rescue, to make to live again the treasure which once was mine. . . . I care nothing what name Lucette calls me; what I want is that the very essence of her being should know me and should love me as of old. When she is folded in my arms, it will not be necessary for me to reveal to her that I am Jacques, because in loving me it is Jacques that she will love.

And I cannot help discounting the charm of the first steps which we shall take on that old road which we had begun to travel together.

But shall I succeed, with my new face, in touching that heart which once was mine? There are moments when an exaltation lifts me up, and others when I am cast down by doubt, trembling so that it seems to me that I am going to die.

III

THE ENCHANTED SHORE

July 20, 1915.

THE Tuileries in the transparent twilight of a summer day. I am sitting beside Lucette. I am better, and I am listening to her praise of the methods by which I am being treated. She is white and pink, slender as a waxen taper, with two great delicate eyes like flowers, and a fragile neck.

I love to look at her in silence. The thoughts which arise in me are so different from any that Lucette could imagine that I am sometimes tempted to smile. It is understood that I am weak and weary, almost discouraged, and that she is to cheer and protect me. I proclaim ceaselessly that I need her like a sister, as an ingenious and good nurse—she is proud of it. Since her despair and the feeling of having had her life of sentiment forever destroyed forbid her yielding

directly to the emotion of love, I offer her a compromise—pity. We are two unfortunates, and I shall propose to her that we come together when the time appears ripe. I wait and watch.

Never did a seducer watch his chance more eagerly than I with this tender little creature. I understand that I must repeat, from the very beginning, the pilgrimage which will lead me to her conquest. I surround her with attentions and sweet words, I try to create such an atmosphere that she will feel lonely as soon as she is separated from me.

Sitting there, half turned toward me, with her profile outlined against the green of the trees, she murmurs:

"What are you thinking about? You don't say anything. Am I boring you?"

I notice this concern for my opinion, and at the same time it annoys me. It is always thus. This whole period will remain in my memory a period of suffering. It is intolerable to me that less than a year after the breaking off of our happiness she should feel emotions which are so far outside of our past life. Every time I feel that she is taking an interest in the tall fellow with the golden eyes who sits beside her, I begin to harden into a savage hostility, and I feel like lashing

her with some cruel speech. Then I reflect that only at the price of this Calvary shall I obtain the result. I must go from station to station without looking back.

Once in a while she says to me:

"Why do you talk to me so little of Jacques now? You used to speak of him so often."

Then I could burst forth in a cry of gratitude. How could she guess that I had systematically forbidden myself to recall the past? It seemed to me that I could only play my new rôle at that price. I have outlined a character for myself; I must keep within it. I answer:

"What was I thinking? I was thinking that I did not deserve such a friend as you."

She blushes with pleasure; it is as though a little flame were lighted beneath her skin. I look at her with a secret irritation, and I think:

"Mockery! Mockery! I say the first commonplace words which come into my head and she trembles with joy. It is perfectly useless to try to put the smallest note of truthfulness into my words."

And a strange sadness fills my heart. It is like the soft falling of ashes. I feel the vibrant reality of my love for her, a single, fervent, despairing love, and I am conscious at the same

time how disastrous it would be for me to speak to her as I feel. This calm little face would be troubled, terrified, and an irreparable catastrophe would separate us. I must lie, lie always, pretending imaginary shades of sentiment when that sentiment is the very principle of my life, all that survives of myself.

She draws her long black glove up on her slender arm and half closes her eyes.

"You know very well that your friendship is very precious to me. I feel so terribly alone since my loss. And then I have a feeling that you understand me better than any one else."

Perhaps this, too, is only a poor commonplace, but I prefer to see in it the dawn of the marvelous day which is to rise for us both, the unconscious prelude to her recognition. Why should I be angry with her if I sometimes touch her? Is it not her very love which makes her vulnerable to me? And would any other man but I have succeeded in gaining from her a moment's attention?

A dry leaf passes before us, rolled along by the wind. We follow it with our eyes. I conjure up the autumn, and an insane impatience seizes me; I long for the time when, at last brought close to her, I can cease to pretend, to

be a stranger, when I can reunite the chain of the past days to the chain of the present, and become again, in short, sincerely and deliciously myself, whether she is conscious of it or not. Then the past will again come to the surface in our lives, and we shall learn to talk again together of the old days.

Still July.

It seems to me that for hours I have remained seated, motionless. Some roses are fading before me in a vase, and their odor, recalling the scene which has just taken place, creates in me a perpetual irritation.

I was alone with Lucette. She had turned toward me, and in her large eyes, with their dark circles, I saw the look of the old days. For an instant, a short instant, I felt myself suspended above the ordinary current of life, and it seemed to me that outside of the world, far from all material activities, we were finding each other. I felt that she was finding me, that the miracle was about to commence. I believed that our personalities were at last shining forth outside of ourselves; I waited, bathed in hope and anxiety, and so detached from the spot where I was, and from my body, and from all the chances of life, that I thought I was only a

sort of flame which wished to dazzle the soul of the beloved, the soul which had appeared on the brink of the mysterious lakes of her eyes.

The most vulgar of incidents, by a brutal shock, destroyed the enchantment. Madame Nord and Madame Hamel came in. I found myself again imprisoned in a body the heart of which was beating, and I saw Lucette, standing up, red and embarrassed, allow herself to be led away by these ladies.

When she came back she sat down again. Her hands were trembling. Her look had changed; it gave me the impression of being masked by an expression of anger. I scarcely knew her; behind the fine texture of her face I saw taking form the lineaments of the same face, aged, coarsened, having lost its child-like charm. She spoke to me. She lashed me with words which were curt, imperative, contemptuous. These women had criticized our intimacy; she had been mortally offended; she held me wanting in tact; she begged me "not to make her ridiculous."

Her fingers were playing among the dark foliage of the roses. A little, loose branch fell upon her wrist; she threw it away sharply. A certain satisfaction at "having put me in my place"

shone upon her features. It seemed to me that all the aspirations which had raised me up were sinking in me like a retiring wave. I remained arid, suffering, sad.

I saw all the objects about me, now, and all were colorless, poor, mean. Our personalities, the Miracle—madness! What was true was the figures of Madame Hamel and Madame Nord watching our "flirtation," and Lucette concerned about their opinion. I was like the Egyptians who had discovered the mysteries of Isis; I had learned a part of the great secret—I must die. Social conventions, usages, all seemed so colorless and false that I remained in a stupor at seeing the importance which Lucette attached to them. I had foreseen that she would rebel when she became aware of the attachment which she was contracting for me, but I never could imagine that it would be because of her fear of public opinion.

For hours, seated amidst the perfume of the roses, I have wept because I had thought that at last I had attracted Lucette's soul, and I have discovered how much she is a prisoner, crushed by a servitude of which she is ignorant.

The Master came; he found me solitary, all at

sea, in my distress. He took my hand and said to me:

"You don't feel well, my poor boy?"

And the diseased sensitiveness within me thrilled at the infinite gentleness of his beautiful voice. Behind the kindly glance I thought that I could discern the soul which was seeking my soul. The Master did not like Marcel, and the Master is becoming more attached to me every week. Our minds, mysteriously in harmony by one of those affinities which words cannot express, comprehend each other and seek to unite as of old. And a slow joy grows within me, sustains me, consoles me.

"Come to-morrow, Marcel; I need you for a little experiment."

A ray of sunlight trembled on the roses; my bitterness disappeared, gave place to a high resolve:

"I will not be conquered. Lucette shall love me and the Master shall find in me once more his favorite, his chosen, pupil."

While the Master talked of the last battles in Russia I thought of the machines locked up in the Capharnaum, and with childish obstinacy linked my fate with the fact that I should be admitted, like the lame student, to work in the sanctuary.

The next day.

Aunt Martine came. Lucette wished to see me.

"You look badly," said the good old lady, sympathizingly, when she had delivered her message.

She was sucking a mint tablet and panting a little. Her face—the fat face of a rich woman—revealed a kindly curiosity. She informed me that Lucette had not slept. She explained in a few words that she took an interest in us. She, too, had watched our intimacy, but she desires to see us united by the most regular of marriages. She loved her nephew tenderly, but no matter; she would think it wrong of Lucette to shut herself up in an austere widowhood. Then the flavor of romance which she thinks she detects in the air charms her in the highest degree. Her conversation fell on me like a warm shower. She complained bitterly of Madame Nord and Madame Hamel; without transition she invited me to go out driving with her.

"You are pale. It is a pity. You are such a handsome fellow, quite irresistible. For you are irresistible, Monsieur Lauret. My poor Jacques was charming, but he had not that something or other— I can understand that you should make these Red Cross ladies gossip. My little

Lucette is wrong to be angry with you. She loved her husband so much that she thinks it criminal to take pleasure in the conversation of another man."

Shall not I myself, in the midst of all these daily platitudes, end by forgetting what is vital?

August 1, 1915.

I had just seated myself opposite Lucette in the dark little room which she uses as a sitting-room in Aunt Martine's apartment; she was playing with the cover of a Chinese marquetry box. Suddenly she said:

"I am leaving to-morrow with Charlot for Bretagne. We must say good-by. I shall probably not have time to return to the hospital before I go."

She said these words all at once, without stopping to take breath, like some one who is hurrying away without looking back. And she played more and more quickly with the box-cover, absorbed in it as if in a piece of work. I watched her busy hands, and above them her mouth, a little contracted, and I had a conviction of victory.

"She dares not look me in the face to tell me that she is going. She is becoming conscious of

the bond which is growing between us, she does not know that it is a *restoration*, so she is displeased and frightened."

I had no idea that she was going away. A few weeks earlier she had talked of leaving the child at Meudon and of continuing her work in the hospital. Nevertheless, I was careful to show no surprise. I only asked her where she was going. She stopped playing with the box-cover. A cold rage seemed to take possession of her; she said, slowly—and I had the impression that she was choosing her words in the hope of wounding me:

"No matter; I am going with some friends. Then I shall go back to my home in the south. I shall never come back to Paris, and I have given up the hospital. My whole life is there, amid my memories. Here I am unhappy at being among people who care nothing for me."

She persisted in not raising her eyes, but I was conscious that she wanted to know how I bore the blow. All about her, in the little boudoir which Aunt Martine's fancy had filled with ebony furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the sun was lighting up spangles. I watched the play of sparks. I was isolated in a great calm. I felt that henceforth Lucette could not escape me, that I held her beneath my will. It was

clear that she had decided to leave because she was frightened by the place which I had taken in her life. She resented it, she wanted to wound me a little to revenge herself.

"I shall miss you greatly," I said. "However, I am getting better. I am going before a retiring-board, and I shall be leaving the hospital myself in a few months. I can only thank you infinitely for the good which you have done me."

She shivered. I could see the crimson tide of her blood flow in successive waves into her cheeks, color them, withdraw, and then return. I knew that she was trembling, that she was compressing her lips in order to control the trembling. I realized that she would have liked to see me dead, to have never known me. I understood that she thought she hated me because of the trouble which I brought into her life. Then I felt within me a sensation of ineffable happiness. I was the conqueror, about to land on the shore of the enchanted country. The monsters and dragons on my aunt's incense-burners seemed to laugh. There was a great embroidered creature which blazed out in the center of a red cushion. I felt as though I were really standing on the threshold of a cavern, beginning to resuscitate the phantom of our past

love. Our love? In spite of Lucette's will, of her scruples, of her resistance, it has found a place in her, is growing there, is controlling her more and more every day. Once more she is becoming toward me the tender creature which she was.

"I am leaving the day after to-morrow, and it is the last time we shall see each other. I hope you will have the complete cure which we can hope for now, and happiness, a great deal of happiness."

Sobs choke her. She breaks off and buries her face in the red cushion with the gold dragon. I understand very well that she wants me to think that she is weeping for her lost happiness, but I am not deceived; her tears are caused by regret at leaving me, and at the same time by a burning shame at this regret, and fear of a feeling which she cannot understand.

Darling, my darling! I watched her sobbing, lying on the dragon with the spreading wings, and I was near bending over her and whispering to her that she need not be grieved nor resist, that she was faithful to what was deepest in her nature at the very moment when she thought she was a traitor to her great love.

And I felt an immense pity toward this frail

form, lying on the black embroidery and shaken with grief. Why must she feel such anguish at the resurrection of our love after I myself had been overwhelmed with such despair? The consciousness of my terrible adventure crushed me anew; humbled, tender, I touched Lucette with my finger:

"I beg of you . . ."

I felt her slender shoulder under the crape of the corsage. She sat up quickly. Her eyes, enlarged by tears, seemed to be asking for mercy. She stammered:

"Leave me, my friend! I am nervous; it is better for me to be alone. Say good-by."

I held out my hand and asked leave to come back the next day.

"No, no! It is better for us to part now."

Her face was flushed; she was holding out her little hands as if to defend herself.

"Very good," I said, coldly. "If you are so busy that you cannot give me a minute, I will not trouble you."

This time I called up on her face the look which I wished to see. A tender anxiety shone from her tear-filled eyes.

"Don't be angry with me. I could not bear it. The reason I am going away is for the baby's

health. It seems to me that Jacques would prefer that. You cannot blame me for thinking of Jacques. I shall die of sadness and ennui down there. Can't you see that?"

Her lips were trembling; an inward light seemed to illuminate her pale face. She was so beautiful that I was dazzled.

"Listen," she said. "You will write to me once in a while. You must not imagine that I shall not regret giving up our friendship. It seems to me that Jacques would have approved of it."

She hesitated for an instant, the silence deepened between us.

"I should not like you," she said suddenly, very low, "to think of me as cross and nervous. You must remember that grief and loneliness are terribly trying for a woman, and that one changes a great deal when one is unhappy."

The tender appeal of her soul to mine moves me deeply. I should like to throw myself at her feet, to kiss her hands, because of all the secret struggle which I feel is going on within her, because of her proud anxiety to remain faithful to our past. And then I should like to humble myself for having understood her so badly, for not having divined all the significance of her contra-

dictions, her rebellion, her harsh and hostile manner. It appears to me now that what has always guided her is a desire to defend herself against me who was slowly becoming too important to her.

The picture which I retain of her, standing in the Oriental room amid the mother-of-pearl boxes and the red cushions, is altogether different from that left by the Lucette who wounded me amid the fragrance of the dying roses. Yes, the picture of this woman whom I thought I knew so well changes without ceasing, alters its appearance, its outlines. In the same way a familiar landscape at certain moments changes and appears quite different from that which one has known for years. Is Lucette multiple, or is it I who see her badly? I long more and more frantically for the day when I shall find her mine without rebellion, when I can again read her mind without effort.

September 19, 1915.

The Luxembourg Garden harmonized singularly well with the state of mind in which I walked there to-day. I was filled with a double sensation of triumph. The splendid arrangement of the stone staircases, the nobility of the balustrades, behind which the golden tops of the

chestnut-trees waved in deep masses, and, above all, the bright spots made by the flower-beds around the fountains, of a striking purple and yellow, mingled with violet—it all appeared to me to be glorifying the inward triumph of my pride.

The people whom I met pitied my crutch-stick and my unsteady walk. How could they have divined my exaltation? I am conscious of having overthrown the fate which tried to crush me. I am comparing myself with the heroes of antiquity who were able to vanquish death: Orpheus went down into the infernal regions to rescue the wife whom he loved. I, out of a dead passion, a mummy embalmed in a faithful heart, have been able to reconstruct a living love. And the little letter in which Lucette asks me to come to see her when I am sent to the south on my convalescence burns my fingers. The phrases are reserved, measured, prudent, but a sentiment of tender obsession exhales from them, and I am sure that now I am near my goal—one of my goals.

How did it happen that the very day on which I received Lucette's letter the Master finally opened to me the last doors of the Capharnaum? I saw the ingenious and formidable machines; the

plates of steel, the hand-levers of nickel dazzled me. . . . I had difficulty in following the Master's explanation because the thought of my victory blazed up in me with terrible violence. I had long ago decided that my admission into the mysterious sanctuary of the rooms at the back would be the palpable sign of my recovered communion with the Master.

"In a few months," said the Master, "these machines will be under fire; their joints will be filled with the mud of the trenches, pieces of shell will warp their articulations, but they will accomplish something, and I like to think that a bit of me will contribute through them to the defense of the country."

I asked a few technical questions at random, but the words formed themselves on my lips without any connection with the roots of my being, all shaken by the most mysterious emotion possible. The gray walls of the Capharnaum, the rectangular zinc vat with its battered edges, the dim, dirty windows, were transfigured, and from every side resounded the hymn of deliverance. Lucette, tender and gentle, the Master, trusting me, were mingled, then followed each other, showed me their double likenesses in a bewildering kaleidoscope. "I have been able, by

force of will, to impose my real personality, under a borrowed form, upon the two beings for whom I cared." The lame pupil bending over his lathe at the back of the room, the long-haired cat rubbing against the Master, were so many accessories of my triumph. And when I found myself back on the sidewalk my lungs were dilated with such a shout of joy that I placed the palm of my hand over my mouth that it might not burst forth.

October, 1915.

"Happiness? Do you think, Marcel, that the object of life is to seek happiness, either for oneself or for others?"

We are in the Capharnaum. The lame pupil is not there; it is I who am helping the Master to complete certain parts. A long gas-flame escapes, whistling, from a soldering-lamp, an odor of tar is thick in the air; the calking mixture hardens in a smelting-receiver. The Master stops for a minute, his hands resting on the white stone top of the table. He has been setting forth certain ideas on the reconstruction of society after the war. I had thought it possible to sum them up in the principle of individual happiness and the maximum social happiness.

"It is not that, Marcel. The aim of each indi-

vidual cannot be to seek his own happiness. His business is to live simply, to continue to live day after day. France wishes to live, at this moment, and her enemies wish to kill her. Our young men come with splendid courage to the assault in Champagne because they feel the savage simplicity of the situation."

"At this moment we are in a crisis. When a danger threatens the swarm, the bees stop gathering honey and fall upon the invader. But when the danger is past?"

"When the danger is past the bees return to gathering honey, not in order that each bee may be happy, but that the swarm may live, now and in the future. It is the same with the human race, Marcel. Concern for happiness is mean and trammeling. Happiness is not the essential thing; it comes to those who have not taken it as their principal object. It is a fruit which one never gathers; it always ripens either too early or too late. By that I mean for those who pursue it. . . ."

The lame pupil returns, and I become absorbed in my task. I realize the terrible egotism which has developed in me since my resurrection. I had already felt it, one day at the end of September in the Luxembourg Garden. I can see

again that autumn twilight. A moist smell was exhaled by the earth and the leaves, the newsboys ran along behind the iron fences, the word "offensive" was on every lip and filled the garden. Women leaned in couples over the same despatch, strangers came together to exchange a few words. I remained motionless, alone, and I suffered because I felt like a dead man among all these living ones. I am cut off from my fellows.

It is in the laboratory alone that, by a magic which I cannot explain, I recover the faculty of being interested in what does not concern either Lucette or me. Outside of the laboratory my only emotions are cold, dissected, theoretical skeletons of emotions. Here they palpitate without my understanding their interior mechanism. I bless the Master, and feel like crying out to him:

"My blood was dry and motionless in my veins. You have touched me, and my blood circulates again, ready to flow for an idea."

The Master represents for me one aspect of my conscience. My conscience sometimes reproaches me for my attitude toward Lucette. I frequently write to her, but as it is impossible

for me to reveal to her what I really think, I write to her, having made for myself a psychology so conceived as to lead her little by little to the point which I wish her to reach. I have considered how far I ought to suggest to her that my support will be useful to her, and how far, on the other hand, I should gently persuade her that in marrying me she would perform, above all, an act of unselfishness. Ought I to insist that a prop will be necessary in her solitude, or should I point out that my mental distress demands a comforter?

I have decided on this latter point of view. I am studying in advance the terms of the letter which I shall write to her this evening; I weigh the different suggestions which I wish to make, I remind her of Jacques. "The marvelous intimacy which united us," and "the extraordinary harmony of our two natures, identical on so many sides." In this way I prepare her to find me again. Then I try to flatter by telling her how impossible it is for me to get on without her, and how the smallest line of her writing transports me. This is not true. I do indeed wait impatiently for her little notes, but without any sentimental fever; I am concerned in measuring where she stands, and what progress I have

made in her heart. Her letters are not "a talisman, the evidence of a friendship which is as precious as my life."

The worst is that I am beginning to enjoy this odd comedy. Everywhere, except at the laboratory, I feel amused at having to write: "Dear Friend, I try to imagine that I am soon to hear the approach of the gentle nurse who was so skilful in scolding me when I was discouraged," or, "I go over ceaselessly the hours when I saw you seated, bending over your knitting, at my window, which has grown dark now that you are there no longer," when, in fact, I never remember spontaneously the time when I saw Lucette at the hospital, since my memory recalls only older events—our gold and rose evenings at Bellagio, our walks in Holland, our evenings by our own fireside.

Lucette takes her influence over me very seriously. She falls into every one of the traps which I set for her. She is enchanted if I write that she is "strong" or "courageous" or "has decision," and that "I envy her her firm attitude toward life when she has suffered so much."

Nevertheless, I feel that she is an unhappy child, full of good-will, who needs a guide, and I promise myself to be that guide. My duplicity

does not trouble me. Still, I was honest formerly, and I long to be so again.

I am beginning to believe that most men, unconsciously or not, transpose their real feelings more or less, as I do. I say to myself that many transpose them even in the face of their own consciences.

When I am with the Master and the lame pupil I sometimes shake off my distraction and with as sincere an enthusiasm as theirs think of the war and of the work which we are doing for the war.

We have changed the Champagne front on the staff map which hangs on the wall, and every day we move our fingers over maps of the western front. These conversations and discussions bring me back into the normal atmosphere of to-day. It sometimes happens that I suddenly perceive that I have forgotten my situation, and I feel an extraordinary relief. Then I ask myself whether the part of wisdom would not be to remain here, to devote myself to science, to accept my existence as a new being, and to give up trying to connect the links of the past with the chain of the present. I wish to hold fast to the higher joy which scientific work gives me. Then the thought of Lucette comes and sweeps every-

thing away. And I try to delude myself by saying that I have a duty to her and Charles, and that I must not abandon them. All the same, a pitiless clearness at the bottom of my mind shows me that it is for my own sake, and not for Lucette or Charlot, that I have undertaken the adventure.

The days go by. I am to appear before a retiring-board and then to go to Arcachon to await its decision. And I feel, beneath my outward and regular life, which goes from the hospital to the Luxembourg and the laboratory, that there are growing the currents of two almost contradictory interests which clash together in whirlwinds, separate, and come together again. On the one hand is enthusiasm, on the other selfishness. There is the Master, patriotic devotion, the love of work; there is Lucette, the life of sentiment. . . . But I am so sure that it is Lucette who will win!

November, 1915, ARCACHON.

The sea spreads out at the foot of the hill, against the sand. It is gray, and the white line of the opposite shore cuts it like a bar. I look at it, and I press in my hand a pineapple with sticky scales.

I have left the Master and I have seen Lucette.

At the station the Master suddenly embraced me. Once more I felt that this embrace went to my real personality, and I was dazzled by this thought for a part of the journey. And then I was sad when I considered how pained the Master will be when he knows that I have given up the idea of going back to him at Paris.

Yes, my decision is irrevocable. I will get myself appointed director of *my* little works, and become, re-become, the husband of Lucette, return to my town and my home.

I have seen Lucette. How is it that I wish confusedly that I had not seen her? Is it because her surroundings, the dear house, the garden, all seemed gloomy, dimmed, less beautiful than I had imagined it? Is it because Lucette herself seemed to be different, and I suffer from the constant transformations of this woman? Yes, I received a shock because her eyes seemed larger than before in a rosier face, and because she walks differently. Did I not remark on the road from the station, with a mixture of irritation and admiration, that free and decided carriage which she showed under her black cape? It was no longer the frail, blond child who had still almost the light, dancing step of a child.

And her voice? Is it true that her voice has

become more sonorous, deeper, with warm tones which she used not to have?

The memory of the morning when we sat near the border of wet box from which arose a bitter fragrance is precious to me. She held Charlot pressed against her gown—for has she not always placed some one between us, as if to prevent certain words from being said? She wore no hat, and her head was bent. Again she seemed young and weak and lonely in the folds of her black gown. How I longed to take her hand as it hung down, and carry it to my lips. And how moved I was by a mysterious sympathy when she told me that she was cold, and I divined, from her timid shiver, her plaintive voice, that it was from the bottom of her soul that came this sensation of an icy solitude. From the top of a plane-tree a drop of water, round and transparent, had fallen on her shoulder, was rolling there, and, I do not know why, it seemed to me like a divine tear, and I heard the most beautiful of hymns of hope arise in my heart.

ARCACHON, *December, a Thursday.*

The sun is flooding the Moulleau road. I have walked without a cane for some time. It is true that I can walk now without limping, so long as

I do not get tired. I am almost ashamed of the joy which I feel at finding myself young and well. There are moments when a fever of lightness develops in me, and I feel a desire to leap, to jump, to develop my muscles. I feel hunger and thirst with an animal violence which I never knew, and a plenitude of strength unknown to me takes possession of me after my meals. In the same way my thoughts are more acute, more rapid, clearer, and the sensation which I have of my life appears to me tenfold greater. The sight of the light between the slashed red trunks of the trees gives me an intense happiness, and I have thrilled with pleasure at the appearance of a filmy cloud reflected in the water.

As I was lying on the sand above the dunes I saw a man and woman coming, and I caught their look at each other. Then I was filled with fury to think that at that moment Lucette, in the streets of a little town, offered to the eyes of every one she met the sight of that rhythmic walk which she used not to have. And I caught myself plucking the leaves of an arbutus which grew close to my hand, tearing them to pieces and throwing them away with exasperation. And then I recovered myself as though awaking from an attack of savagery, and I went home

slowly, with my throat dry and my mind discontented.

Same day, toward evening.

The corner which I prefer in the garden of the little hotel, now transformed into a convalescents' hospital, and which gives me hospitality, is this bench under the trellis. The last roses hang above my head, small and odorless; before me the turf is calm. The big, tawny cat bounds, stretches itself, leaps over the clumps of chrysanthemums, then stretches out with magnificent litheness and goes to sleep.

The wind gently lifts the dead leaves which strike against one another with the sound of crumpled silk. I am alone on this bench, and I move along as if to make room for some one beside me. An acute longing comes to me to lay my head on a shoulder, to press a hand between my own. I feel myself suddenly so alone, so deserted, that I take up the cat which was rubbing itself against my legs. I place it beside me, I caress it, I talk to it. All the twilight seems to enter into my soul and to darken it.

And now, for the first time in a long while, I doubt whether I can go back to living like other people. What is the meaning of this stealthy disgust, this distrust, which is creeping into me

and would soon make me sob like a child? Shall I ever succeed in having a life as secure and full of confidence as that of the angora which has gone to sleep on my knees?

The next day.

I feel oppressed by the bad night which I passed, and the absurd dream which I had weighs upon me.

This is it: I was seated on the top of the dunes, as I was yesterday, and I saw Lucette coming toward me, dressed as she is in the little photograph which was in the envelope with the letters, in a white gown with puckered flounces and the ridiculous sleeves puffed at the wrists. She came quite calm and smiling. I awaited her and an indescribable anxiety possessed me because I *knew* that a mysterious danger was upon us. When she reached the foot of the dune the person raised her head and I saw that her face had changed. It was no longer quite Lucette; I recognized the woman whose burning glance I had intercepted yesterday and who ran toward me holding out her arms. She climbed the dune. I seized her by the arm. Then we were inclosed in a sort of court with high, smooth walls, and I tried to think of the spell which would restore Lucette to her accustomed form.

The woman, draped in a scarlet robe, looked at me defiantly. She held a bouquet of roses in her hand, and I understood that these roses were the cause of the enchantment. I tried to seize them, and immediately the woman disappeared and I had before me only a great tiger-cat with green eyes which continued to look at me with an intolerable expression of mockery. Rose-leaves were heaped around me, the cat laughed sneeringly, and suddenly I realized that I was stretched on the ground, and that the blood, in great waves, was running from my wounded head. Then I waked up with a cry.

ARCACHON, *December 28, 1915.*

I am just back from accompanying the Master to the station. I came slowly up from the summer town to the winter town. From one end to the other of the little road which winds round the funicular the picture of last evening pursued me. Strange! while the Master was with me I thought almost constantly of Lucette, of the answer which I was to receive from her, and now that the Master has gone it is his memory which obsesses me.

Certainly I did not expect the Master's visit. I had written him that I had just received the

official notification that I had been retired, and my letter must have revealed an evident depression. This depression is largely due to my anxiety regarding my future life. I passed ten days uncertain about everything, unable to resolve to write to Lucette, to ask her to become my wife. There were moments when it seemed as though I were committing a crime in becoming Lucette's husband under any other shape than that in which she had loved me. The little trellis, which has no roses any longer, the paths leading down to the sea among the pines, the broad fire-roads in the middle of which grow young pines like Christmas trees, all in turn witnessed my hesitation. Finally I wrote. I tried to place matters in such a light that Lucette would understand that I should not at all try to make her forget the years which were past, and that I had no expectation of finding her a young and happy woman; I tried to remove the scruples which will certainly torment her, and I said much about Charles, his education and his future. The feeling of the tragic irony of my situation pierced my heart, and I stopped short several times, with my head in my hands, before my unfinished letter. The miserable flatness of the words which I was compelled to use was

odious to me. And I found myself laughing convulsively as I compared the inward state of my mind, the problems which I continually set before myself, with the little set phrases, in many respects artificial in their sentiment, which I was patiently setting down.

Nevertheless, the letter got off four days ago. And the same evening the Master arrived. He took my arm and said that I had worried him by the sad tone of my letters. I quickly saw that he attributed this sadness to regret that I could not go back again to the front. He added that I might be useful to the defense of the country by scientific work. We were seated under the arbor. I listened to him, and a bitter shame burned my cheeks because I knew that he was mistaken. I do not really regret finding myself out of the army; I think I have a feeling that I have already given my life, more than a year back, so that nothing can now be asked of me. My personality has escaped annihilation by so strange a miracle that it seems to me that it has a right to retire within itself and take itself as the center of the world.

Must I confess that the certainty that the Master would be of a different opinion rather made his presence a burden during those four

days? During the hours of daylight, as we walked together in the monotonous forest, I would look to the right and the left at the indefinite series of reddish trunks, tapped above coarse earthenware receptacles. Fear of hearing him again propose my collaboration in his work filled me with uneasiness. I turned the conversation toward the most incongruous subjects with feverish haste, and I kept thinking:

"When and how shall I tell him that I do not intend to return to Paris, that I mean to marry Lucette and resume the direction of the works?"

After I had desired so eagerly to be admitted to the Capharnaum, after being so ardently interested in the machines on which he was working, was it not absurd and incomprehensible that I should altogether lose interest in the work which I had undertaken? This thought pursued me ceaselessly, mingled with anxiety to hear from Lucette. I saw the Master look at me anxiously several times.

"Don't talk if it tires you, my friend," he said once; "it is sweet to find ourselves together, and sometimes people understand each other better when they do not speak. It so often happens that because of incommunicable inward

preoccupations words interpret the mind falsely instead of revealing it."

I resented his having divined me; I resented his having robbed me of the solitude which I thought I now desired with all my might, after having suffered so severely. When twilight fell we would sit in my room or in a little glass-inclosed terrace which overlooked the garden. There also I felt discontented.

Then last night. . . . The memory of those hours lives in me with a singular distinctness. There was a pungent sweetness, a sort of veiled charm, an atmosphere of mystery. We were alone in the glass terrace, the rain was falling on the zinc roof, and in the half-obscurity in which we were the shower sounded very loud. I had had for some minutes a lively presentiment that we were near the explanation. And it was a relief when the Master asked me what were my plans. I spoke to him of my desire to marry Lucette. He did not appear surprised; he hesitated a little.

"That young woman came to see me a little while before she left Paris," he said. "She recommended you to my care. I thought I divined then that she took an interest in you for reasons slightly different from those which she gave

herself. She thought that she loved you only because Jacques loved you."

He said also:

"To speak very frankly, the thought of such a union would have pained me a few months ago. As I saw you, you were very different from Jacques, and it would have seemed to me that you could not bring up his son as he would have wished. My opinion now is wholly different. There are extraordinary analogies between your two natures which I never suspected for years. Now I should say simply that you must not allow care for your personal happiness to prevent your giving to the country what you can give."

It was at this moment that, with a suddenness by which I am still stupefied, there came to my lips a proposition of which I had not before thought. I told the Master that I desired to become director of the little provincial works, and I offered to install, at my own expense, in a building there, a little laboratory in which I could pursue the part of the researches with which he had specially intrusted me. Loosed by this offer, a whirlwind of projects assailed my brain. I thought again with intensity of those machines which I had so completely forgotten. I saw their imperfections. I called his attention

to one or two points to be studied. At the same time the reasons which I could give for not returning to Paris presented themselves in crowds. I urged my health, Lucette's wishes (of which I knew nothing, not knowing even if she would marry me). The Master, moreover, had concentrated his attention on the scientific points on which I had touched. We argued. The darkness became thicker, the roof above us still sounded beneath the drops. It was agreed that I should work as I had suggested. Our conversation grew wider. I lost the consciousness of the present strange conditions and, little by little, we began to talk of the scientific interests which formerly controlled me. I spoke of them easily; the Master, with the youthful fire which characterizes him, presented his objections. The discussion, as often happens, made our minds more acute; raised above the earth, we approached various faces of the problem. Suddenly, coming out of a dream, I distinctly heard the Master say:

"Come, Jacques; nothing justifies you in making that hypothesis. . . ."

I started in spite of myself. "Ah!" I cried, passionately, "you called me Jacques. Why?"

Moved by some instinct, I don't know what, I sprang to the switch and turned on the elec-

tricity. The veranda was filled with light. I was standing, with my eyes probably wild and my teeth chattering. I frightened the Master.

"Forgive me, my boy," he said. "I make you talk too much while you are still weak. There is nothing in my mistake to disturb you so much. I have told you that for some months you have reminded me in a striking way of Jacques. And I did not even yet suspect the close knowledge which you had of his ideas, or how much you shared them. But you are very pale. Let us go out, Marcel; your hands are burning. . . . The rain has stopped; we will look at the stars."

ARCACHON, *January 8, 1916.*

I have read her reply over again by the shore of the sea—the Moulleau road, among the pines. I knew that she would consent; it could not be otherwise.

MY FRIEND,—I must confess that I expected your letter. The delicacy with which you speak of Jacques, of my past life, and of my sorrow touches me infinitely. I am your friend and I am willing to become your wife, so long as I can be of some service to you and so long as I can do only good to my son in giving him such a protector as you.

The sea is calm. A ray of sunshine lights up the shore opposite and creates there an irregular

line of phantom castles. I feel the ground, covered with pine needles, to make sure that I am really there, that the hour of reparation has struck, and that I am going to find Lucette again. In an almost religious contemplation I wait for joy. And here it is. It is a hymn which rises in me, bursts forth at last, sings with the sea, mingles with the wind in the tops of the trees, in the wide undulation of the sea, and rocks me and submerges me and rolls me over.

I remain trembling, dazzled, like a pilgrim who has walked for years in the desert amid frightful solitudes, whose feet were bruised, whose hands were torn, and who arrives, after despairing of ever finding his way, at the gate of the city which he sought.

And the play of my imagination causes me to call up on the sunlit shore opposite me the Magnificent Country on which I am about to land. No doubt there are there, on that strip of earth, much human misery and despair, but for me, for some minutes, it becomes a heavenly mirage, the tangible realization of my happiness.

I am alone; a flock of birds passes over the lagoon, a white sail fills above a red hull. I am the Exile rather than the Pilgrim; I have

been cast out of the city which belonged to me; I have wandered, worn by cold, poverty, and hunger, and here I am before the city every stone of which I know. And I know that I can finish my days there where I longed so passionately to do so.

Yes, among the yellow strips which the sun throws between the white buildings what I see is our life *which is going to begin again.* Once more shall I protect the slumber of the woman whom I love; once more shall I hear the clear notes of her early "Good morning"; once more—every minute—shall I feel her presence about me.

And I stifle, overwhelmed by too great a happiness, and I should like to rise, stretch out my arms, and cry:

"I have conquered Death, I have wrestled with Fate, and I have forced Fate to return to me that which she had taken from me. . . ."

The broad colors of a halo surround the setting sun. The atmosphere is marvelously transparent. Very high clouds pass by, light and soft. From all this is loosed a sort of vivifying purity. A sacred desire comes to me to be good to Lucette, to cultivate the little soul of Charles. I have a sudden sentiment that I ought to purchase my

victory by a great effort toward inward improvement.

Standing on the sandy dune, before the sea and the sun, with my eyes fixed on the mysterious promontory which symbolizes the future, I swear to be all that is good.

IV

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

PARIS, *January, 1916.*

I HAVE just left Lucette. I am so sad that I could weep. It seems to me that the disjoined sections of a growing disquiet are moving within me, striving to connect themselves into a whole.

I opened the door of the drawing-room. She was there, alone; I saw her standing, with her face upturned.

"I am acting wrongly, perhaps," she said, "but I love you so much, Marcel."

She fell upon my breast. She is so different from anything that I could have supposed that an uneasiness chilled me. I had made her sit down on the divan beside me. I held her hands and I talked. I talked without concerning myself about the words which I said, and I think that she scarcely listened to them. I do not know

what she was thinking about. As for me, I was absorbed in watching the expression which I saw on her face. The flame of a lamp lighted her brightly, accentuated her brilliant eyes, her scarlet lips. It was not the trusting effulgence which had illumined my life for years; it was not that desire to please me which formerly bathed every feature of her face when she turned toward me. No! I thought that I read distress and defiance, pride and passion. It was indeed the face of Lucette, but it was not my Lucette.

I told her of my plans. She drew back a little and her pretty face hardened.

"Then it is decided; you got yourself appointed there without telling me! You desire that we should go and live down there!"

Her tone was that of wounded pride; I comprehended that I had offended her to the very depths.

"My darling, as I wrote you, I have no idea of making you forget Jacques. It would be most pleasant for me to continue the work in which I formerly co-operated with him. Would you not like Charles, as he grew up, to have before his eyes the scenes which his father loved?"

She was nervously twisting the chain of black

boxwood which she held in her hand. Her delicate nostrils trembled.

"I should not have thought—" she began. Then she interrupted herself abruptly, and shook her head impatiently. "Listen, Marcel," she said to me, point-blank. "You don't love me simply because I was Jacques's wife?"

Ah! how obscure and inextricable it all is!

VILLE-SUR-SORGUE, *March 20, 1916.*

Did I not think that the return here to the dear white house would be the goal attained, happiness regained? Did I not imagine that, having married Lucette, I should settle down into my former life? And now, from every side, at the first steps which I take in this building, invisible voices cry out to me: "Take care! Nothing is the same, since Lucette does not know that it is with you that she has to do."

Yesterday it was the journey. Long hours in the train. At first night. By the light of the lamp with its blue cover I could distinguish opposite me the white patch made by Charles, wrapped in a woolen blanket, and lying against his mother's knees. A keen, sweet emotion arose in me. I cannot express what a desire I have to find the road to that child's heart. I asked to

have him call me "Papa," and it was granted, although Lucette showed some irritation on that occasion. In certain circumstances she regards me as almost an enemy and mistrusts me. I feel that she thinks me lacking in tact, that I wish to trespass on territory which does not belong to me. She is surprised and displeased at it.

Have I been maladroit, perhaps? With the sound of the dull rumble of the wheels on the rails as an accompaniment, I try to understand Lucette's state of mind since our *remarriage*. A fortnight. It is a fortnight since I took her to the little hotel in Versailles, so quaint and so calm. These two weeks seem to me to have lasted for months. Have not months gone by since the night of our marriage, when she wept so much, as if overcome by remorse and regret, only to transform herself afterward and cry out that she loved me? I can see that instant during which I suffered so much, during which it seemed to me that I could have killed her to make her keep silent. She was dressed in a white peignoir with a dark violet border, and was crouching before the fire. She talked, without appearing to know what she said, and every one of her words was to me like the blow of a knife.

She said that she would have liked to remain

faithful to Jacques, but that, to her misfortune, she had met me; that she had loved me without wishing to, that she did not understand me and that I frightened her but that she loved me, that she could not help it, and that she would go to the end of the world with me.

And looking at the flame in her eyes, at the almost insupportable light of her intense face, I felt in a terrible fashion how her memories of our love-life, of our first and true love-life when I was Jacques, had become pale and colorless for her. And the strangest of jealousies tears me. I want her to love me, but to love me as she once loved me, with that touching confidence, that submissive tenderness which she showed and which gave me so much pleasure. Instead of that there is a fawning and passionate warmth in the midst of which I feel like seizing her and crying:

"What! Is this what you can say to a man, to *another* man, since you see in me only the face and form of Marcel, when you pretended to love me—me, Jacques?"

It is then that I push her away, that I frighten her, that she turns on me a look brilliant with reproaches and tears. And then I feel ashamed, ask pardon, struggle in the inexplicable. . . .

Yes, that night, while the train rolled through the dark country, I felt myself shut up in a blind alley. Then the dawn came and Charles awoke; Lucette leaned over him and smiled deliciously at me. At once the bright blue of the sky between the tops of the green firs filled my being. I thought once more that all would be easy, and I took Charlot on my knees.

He stood before the window, laughing, and clapping his hands at each flock of crows that he saw.

"More birds, papa. Look! look!"

His little voice, so marvelously clear, stirred me to the depths. I pressed him to me, and I petted him. Then I heard Lucette's voice:

"The child is too excited. Come to me, Charlot—come to mamma. Come, my jewel."

And I met a hard look, almost jealous—a look which meant that this child belonged to her, to her only, and that I must not forget that in many corners of her being I was, in spite of everything, only an intruder.

Alas! If at certain moments I almost feel that she loves me too much, at others I certainly feel that she does not love me enough.

We drove up the road bordered by plane-trees; we crossed the old bridge and turned toward

the suburbs. Charles was babbling on his nurse's knees; Lucette was silent, visibly absent-minded; and I felt myself saturated with emotion to the point where I asked myself how I should control myself sufficiently.

Yes, here are the green door in the white wall, the narrow garden which smells of damp box, the house. But in the vestibule I stop short. Everything is changed. Since the visit which I made on my way to Arcachon everything has been turned topsy-turvy.

I knew that Lucette had come here for a fortnight since our engagement, to "put things in order," but could I have suspected that she would have systematically replaced the hangings by new ones, moved the furniture, altered the arrangement of the rooms?

She mounts the stairs before me. She opens the door which formerly— This used to be our bedroom, this which has become a blue-and-white nursery, decorated with a frieze representing ducks and chickens, to which Charles is already holding out his arms. I do not recognize either the brass bedstead or the varnished wardrobe which are in our new bedroom, which looks on the street.

Lucette went in ahead of me. She takes off

her hat and folds her jacket. She gives me the feeling of being so far from me that I am stifled. I say:

"So you have changed everything, without saying a word to me, without consulting me!"

She makes a little impatient gesture and replies, with her profile turned toward the looking-glass:

"What does it matter? You only saw it casually, while I— It is better this way. How is it that you can't understand?"

She stops short, as she never used to do, as she often does now. She goes on slowly:

"You get yourself appointed here, without asking my opinion, because you did not wish me to prevent you from doing as you chose. It is only just that you should allow me to adapt myself as I choose to this singular situation."

She spoke to me clearly, frankly, and yet I fancy that there is a whole mass of thoughts which she has not told me.

VILLE-SUR-SORGUE, *April 4, 1916.*

It is just a month since I was *remarried.* I had not foreseen that in re-entering the setting of my previous life I should so intensify the inconceivable atmosphere which surrounds me.

My chief concern since I arrived here is, "No matter what it costs, Lucette must never know that I am Jacques." Yes, I have reached this strange reversal of my point of view, for it seems to me that I constantly watch that which I ought not to watch and see that which I ought not to see. When I am alone with Lucette I am sometimes as embarrassed as though I were hidden behind a curtain, in order to catch her with some one else. . . . Very often in my moments of intimacy with her, I am spectator rather than actor, a spectator who remembers, who compares, who suffers. To think that I could resuscitate the great love which she had for me! How absurd! This great love remains embalmed in its bandages. I have awakened a new passion, entirely different from the old sentiment.

Sometimes I ask myself furiously if the fact that I am Jacques has helped me at all in winning this woman. I find myself believing that things would have gone as they have if I had really been Marcel, inside as well as out. And then I am overwhelmed with mortification.

To fancy that I arrived at this house as one returns from a journey! Ulysses returning to Ithaca. But Ulysses was recognized by his servant and his dog, and nobody has divined me.

I am Marcel Lauret. How should any one doubt it?

I am Marcel for Justin, the old superintendent of the works, for the fat concierge who helps with the housework, for little Madame Leclerc, I am Marcel. . . . This little Madame Leclerc, whom Marcel used to call the "fascinating widow," has become Lucette's intimate friend since the war began. I was not greatly pleased to find her quite at home the other day in the little sitting-room. She rose, slipped her arm around Lucette's waist, and said, holding out her hand:

"I was waiting for you, Monsieur Lauret. I hope you recognize me in spite of the five years which have passed over my head. . . . And I am crazy about this pretty woman who is your wife, and we get on as well as possible, she and I."

I had often seen this little Madame Leclerc. She had always appeared to be mocking and absent-minded at the same time, pretty enough, but with too sensual a beauty. Now she seems to me quite different. She is much more amiable, to begin with; I never saw in her this evident desire to be agreeable to me.

Just as objects seem transformed when the lamp which lights them is moved, so all living

beings seem changed in my eyes, now that they behave to me as they would to Marcel.

More than ever I have the feeling that instead of being in the pleasant, bright room where I ought to be, I am outside, on the other side of the window-pane, watching despairingly what goes on and seeking a way to get in again—to get into my own house.

I also feel like those prisoners who are condemned to silence who can never again speak to a human being. And just as these unfortunates talk to themselves in order not to become either dumb or mad, so I talk to myself when I am alone.

I go out on the road with the plane-trees; the bluish panorama of the hills surrounds me, the Wolf's Rock overhangs the valley above pleasant little inclosures of vines, of white houses and tilled fields. I walk rapidly and I recall *my* memories, those which indisputably belong to me, Jacques Breton, alone, and in which Marcel Lauret can have no share.

I find some which are clear, luminous, exact: Bellagio, always a corner of the lake, a clump of roses, and there are dark holes into which I sink. But are there not broken links in all chains of memories? And I try to recollect little details,

those details which one does not tell in conversation—the color and the pattern of the paper in such and such a room, the dishes which we have eaten, but it all becomes mixed, and I end by not knowing whether I am recollecting or inventing.

Yesterday, while I was going through the works with old Justin I stopped him abruptly before a small door and said:

"Did not Monsieur Breton want to put a third reservoir here?"

"Yes, but it was after you left. Monsieur Jacques must have thought a great deal about the works to have told you that."

A little later, before the incandescent mass of cinders thrown out of a little car:

"Do you suffer any more from your burn, Justin? A little accident splashed some on your ankle."

This time he stopped short. "Oh-ho! Monsieur Breton told you everything, then, in detail. It is just here that I was burned and Monsieur Breton was behind me."

I turn away. Every memory has faded out in me by one of those sudden eclipses which are becoming customary with me. I seek, I feel about; all is but void. Then there rises in me

the memory of a dividing fence, vague, half drowned in mist. I say, timidly:

"The neighbor next door made some trouble before the war. He asserted that the fence—"

Justin starts back; his little gray eyes are uneasy. "Oh-ho! That is too much!"

I feel obliged to explain. "You see, we talked about the smallest things, Monsieur Breton and I—we had so much idle time."

And a ridiculous fear of being divined (as if the thing could be divined by any one!) was mingled in me with shame at having tried experiments on Justin. There is no denying it, I feel the need of telling my memories in order to test their truth. And I feel that it is not finished. I caught myself in the act this morning. I was sifting my memory in order to find in it more and more recollections, the most absurd, the smallest.

And a new temptation came to me, the most dangerous of all, perhaps.

April 6th, the next day.

I yielded to it. I knew that I ought not to do it, and I did it. Whither are we going? What will become of Her, of me?

Lucette, seated, was arranging her hair. The

comb passed through it again and again. Before me, in the mirror, I could see her eyes which shone through the fleece that enveloped her. From afar, from very far, a picture rose to the surface of my memory, a bubble which comes from the depths of the water, reaches the top, and bursts. I said, almost in spite of myself, and yet my heart beat like the strokes of a hammer:

"How splendid your hair is! Did you not let it down for Jacques one evening, on Lake Como, in a boat?"

She laid down the comb. In the glass I saw her face turn pale to the whiteness of marble. Her lips trembled as if she had wished to speak, and found herself too much overwhelmed by emotion to do so. Finally she said, simply:

"Be silent! Oh, be silent!" And she covered her face with her hands. Her cry revealed such distress that I felt almost criminal. She added, still with that wounded tone which exhaled a wail, "I beg of you, leave me alone."

I left the room. I went down-stairs. The soft light of the morning filled the path in the garden. Charles was running between the box hedges. He came toward me. His fresh, rosy face shone, seemed the center of a luminous irradiation. He held a few violets in his hand.

"My bouquet! Look!"

Never as at this moment had I felt the power of life which is in this child. He was leaping, firm on his sturdy little legs.

"My poor child!" I said, picking him up. "What is going to become of us?"

April 7, 1916.

I must find something to cling to. It can only be work.

April 15, 1916.

It was long after nightfall when I left the carriage-house which had been transformed into a laboratory. It is the first week that I have worked at perfecting the war-machines. The model sent by the Master, which I finished setting up the day before yesterday, stands under a glass roof. The presence of this metal seems to me like a talisman. It is the symbol of my activity.

I threw myself into work with a furious ardor. The days which have just passed appear to me full, comforting; it seems to me that I have been dipped in some mysterious spring of energy. Here is the former carriage-house; Justin is feeding the furnace in which bars of steel are heating; there is the lathe which will hum in a few min-

utes. I stand behind my table and work at the little piece which I am altering, and an immense peace descends upon my soul; I concentrate all my attention on that which I hold in my hands.

There is a sharp knock at the door and Justin goes to it. It is the newspaper and we both interrupt our work.

"They will not get Verdun, will they, monsieur?"

Justin believes, with most of the people who live in the neighborhood, that if Verdun is taken the Germans will be definitely victorious, and there will be nothing more to be done. He brings me the echo of the opinions of the little town. I try to inspire him with the will to resist and fight, which grows stronger in me every day; through this imperfect intelligence I try to reach the minds of the workmen and foremen who meet every evening at Brichon's lemonade-shop and discuss the despatches.

At the same time that I try to contribute to the defense by improving on the Master's work I become conscious of another duty which is incumbent on me—to maintain the morale of the people about me. As I go through the works I have this thought with me; I interrupted a little fireman who was declaiming:

"My friend, what you are saying is precisely what the Boches want to have us say."

I explained; a little circle formed about me. I felt that they were attentive and I set myself to convincing them. It seemed to me that I succeeded and I continued my round with my heart filled with joy. . . . Is it possible that for months I almost lost interest in the war?

I left the laboratory. It was dark and was raining; there, in the narrow street, beneath the trembling gaslight, a panic fell upon me. It seemed that I could not again face Lucette. I turned my back on the house and walked off under the downpour.

There was never any explanation between Lucette and me after the scene of the other day. She never told me what she thought and I cannot say anything to her, either. I know that she is anxious and that she suffers.

The other evening she slipped down at my feet; sitting on the floor, she put her arms around my knees.

"Marcel, I beg of you, love me," she said. "There are moments when it seems to me that you do not trust me, that I am a stranger to you." She was weeping. "I love you so much, and you pretended that I was necessary to you."

Necessary? No, not this young, ardent woman, who implores me and sobs in the fever of her passion. I should never have wanted her in my life. Who will give me back the gentle companion who came to my side, confided to me her smallest scruples, accepted my opinions, and lived only in the shade which I made for her. It is *that* Lucette who is necessary to me.

I thought I would find her again as one finds a spring in a valley, a rock on a beach. Alas! that Lucette existed only for Jacques, and I am no longer Jacques.

As the days go by I become more conscious of my blindness. I thought that human beings were always identical with themselves, and I perceive that they exist only in relation to others. But the Master, and Justin?

April 20, 1916.

The only thing about which Lucette speaks to me freely is her love for me, and she prefers to have me talk principally about my love for her. Formerly we used to talk about matters foreign to ourselves, of our plans. Now she avoids the subject if I ask her even how she has spent her day, and I am convinced that she confides in Marthe Leclerc infinitely more than in me.

Marthe Leclerc's continual presence in our

house irritates me. Yesterday I got back from the laboratory and the works earlier than usual. I passed through the dining-room. Marthe Leclerc and Lucette were talking animatedly in the little sitting-room; I saw them through the glass door. I opened that door and they became silent and constrained. I felt that I had broken the thread of their conversation, and *I knew that they had been talking about me.*

Lucette would never have told any one what had passed between us *when I was Jacques.* I was her only confidant and the only person she relied on. She had not these frenzies of passion which seize her now, but how much more serene was her behavior, how much more dignified and more comforting.

She complains of me. I know that she complains of me. Little Madame Leclerc looks at me out of her great eyes with pupils like a cat's, and black circles about them, and in her look I can read curiosity. Yes, it is curiosity, the excitement of being mixed up in a love-affair which heightens her color and half opens her mouth. She, too, has changed a great deal.

What could they have been saying? I stand before them as before enemies. I feel angrily that they belong to another race than mine, a

sly race, which we never understand well. . . . I would have sworn that I knew Lucette, that I could describe what her life might become, and I know how profoundly I was mistaken.

April 22, 1916.

I walked softly through the dining-room; the nurse was mending stockings under the hanging-lamp and Charlot was dragging his woolly bear around the room. Everything was simple and bright. I had the newspaper in my hand, and I hoped that Lucette would ask me about the *communiqué*, would talk to me about the war. I felt more and more the need of talking to her about things which do not touch her personality or mine, and more and more she hypnotizes herself solely upon "our love." She seems to want to shut herself up in her thoughts, her preoccupations, her concerns, as in a secret tower which I have no right to enter. She comes out of it for passionate declarations and eager questions.

She was in the little sitting-room; at the first glance I saw a package of letters open beside her. She pretended to start in surprise when I came in, but I was not taken in by it. She had brought down our correspondence of these last months in

order to furnish a pretext for the explanation which she seeks and I try to avoid. I hardened myself, irritated. "Is she doing this on the advice of Marthe Leclerc? Is the other one waiting at home, excited and anxious, the result of this comedy?"

I felt so hard, so ugly, that I was ashamed of myself, and a lassitude filled with disgust took possession of me. I wanted to go out, but Lucette spoke to me:

"I forgot myself reading over all these," she said. "I did not know how late it was."

I did not believe her, and it was extremely painful to me. She rose, and before coming to me drew with an easy movement the curtain which covered the glass of the door. It was insupportable for me.

"Call Charlot," I said. "I would like to see him before he goes to bed."

She frowned. "We will go up to his room while he is eating his soup. It is too damp for him here."

I watched her maneuvering, which aimed to call my attention to the scattered letters the whiteness of which attracted my eye in spite of myself. She finally murmured:

"Marcel, what have I done to you?"

The anxiety which I read in her look touched me. For a short instant I saw again in her the frail little darling whom I wished to spare every sorrow. She divined my emotion. She said:

"Sit down a moment, I beg, and listen to what you wrote me four—five—six months ago."

With a feeling of repulsion I took the leaves which she held out to me. Leaning against me, she placed one hand on my shoulder, and I felt her little slender fingers sink into my flesh like a bruise. She pointed out with the other hand the passages to which she wished to call my attention.

Comedy, comedy, what a comedy we are living! And am I not more responsible than she? Here are pages and pages of eloquence in which I beg her to be "my support, my strength, my courage." Did I really paint myself as so weary, so weak a man, who wished to clutch at a woman's dress as at a piece of floating wreckage? And was it this attitude of a mendicant, cringing before a creature of superior order, which touched Lucette? Was it these lyric outpourings?

"Do you know that you were the light of my poor days, and that when I opened my eyes in the morning my first thought was that I was going to see you in a few hours?"

That, at any rate, is true. I spent whole morn-

ings in the hospital watching the flight of the minutes which separated me from the hour of arrival. But how many lies there were around a few honest expressions! I now read attentively these long pages in which I did not even recognize my handwriting. The artifice which I felt in almost every line of it filled me with discomfort. Yes, I was determined to conquer Lucette by means of any stratagem, no matter what. It seemed to me that from the moment when I should be again loved by her all would be cleared up and we should find ourselves face to face as of old.

Charles was shouting with laughter in the next room; Lucette's fingers bit into me more deeply.

"You told me that you could only live by leaning upon me, and now my love seems to be a burden to you."

I thought: "I wanted to live with you, beside you, as in the past, to live—that is to say, to have in common all the little events of every day; to find you again tranquil, confiding, in calm conversations. I did not wish this separation of our two existences which you are unwilling to have come together except in the egotism of passion." I thought also: "How is it that you did not see that these letters were not sincere;

that they were all written on one theme, a theme chosen to please you?"

And then another thought struck me; I recollected other letters, the letters inclosed in the envelope with the green wax seals. I said to myself that Lucette was formerly no more sincere than I was now and that I was deceived as she was.

She sat down on the ground beside me, in the position which she loves. She was silent, but I could hear that she was weeping. I mechanically smoothed her hair with the palm of my hand. My mouth was dry with bitterness. I said to myself:

"If all this had not happened, if there had been no war, I should have continued, I, Jacques, to live with Lucette. Lucette would probably have remained for me the little companion, fresh, pure, and calm. But at the bottom of her nature there would none the less have been the possibility, of which I should have been ignorant, of an ardent Lucette, desirous of living her own life, eager to talk, passionate, ready to confide to any feminine ear her aspirations and her despair."

Yes, I looked at the pretty female form crouching at my knees and weeping gently, weeping at my hardness and my unwillingness to let myself be adored, at my refusal to say passionate words

of love, and a new, terrible jealousy sprang up like tares.

"She was like that, and I did not know it. The picture which I made of her was false. A day might have come when she would have fallen, in the same way, conquered, at the feet of another man. She perfectly understood, she, that she was deceiving me, that she was deceiving this Jacques whom she pretended to love. It was for this reason that she found it so terrible to come back here, for this that she altered the hangings and changed the colors of the papers. She did not wish the same walls to see little Lucette, with the transparent soul, transformed into a woman dominated by passion, a woman who has for the man whose name she has consented to bear only a selfish and ferocious love, without true sympathy. She wishes to keep hidden those corners of her heart and of her mind which I possessed when I was Jacques. She gives me what I never had from her, what I believed was not in her."

My temples beat, hammered by words which I did not formulate. Has each being infinitely varied ways of loving? Would Lucette become still different for some one else? She frightens me, now that I comprehend how completely she

is a stranger to me. She cannot understand me; very good. But I do not understand her any better. A world moves behind that regular forehead, and I do not know, in reality, what it can be. Are there for each woman, according to the circumstances through which she may go, a thousand possible manners of being which have no relation to one another? Does it mean anything to affirm that she *is* this or that? She is this for Jacques, that for Marcel, and something else for Marthe Leclerc, for Charlot, Aunt Martine, Madame Hamel, and Madame Nord. Hpocrisy? Not at all.

Ah! how I detested her, this spring evening, for not being simple, fixed once for all in the outlines which I had assigned for her. And how she must detest me, she, too, because I astonish and disappoint her.

May, 1916.

The buds have opened, expanding into a thousand little tender leaves. The air is soft and light above the hills. I am coming back, with long steps, from the post. The telegram announcing to the Master that I have overcome the last difficulty has just gone. The Master will come. When? To-morrow? Soon, in any case. His ringing voice will compensate me for the hours

of research and discouragement. And the machines can at last be sent to the front to do their work.

I calculate: the perfecting, the trials, the wholesale construction. A few months more, and then an emanation of the Master in which I shall have mingled a bit of my poor little genius will help the soldiers in the blue hoods in their efforts against the Boches. I will go to Verdun by proxy. I am not altogether a useless derelict. I bring a contribution to the war, to the greatest of wars.

Blessed be this enthusiasm which I had so long forgotten, and which reappears active and lively, like a young shoot, springing from a mutilated trunk which might have been thought dead!

An almost infantile impatience devours me. I can see myself beginning to turn the levers in his presence; the ingenuity of the method which I have employed fills me with pride. And then crowds of ideas come to me, jostling one another, confused and hurried, seeking to impose themselves on my mind; they are projects for different mechanisms for use in the war. I prepare to sift them, to examine them, when a woman coming toward me cuts short my enthusiasm.

It is Marthe Leclerc who comes forward and smiles at me. I cannot help thinking her handsome. She stops me and presses my hand:

"This is the first time we have been alone since you came. I am going on an errand outside the town. Come a little way with me."

I go with her as if I could not do anything else. We are on the empty road, bordered by plane-trees.

"You used to come to see me formerly," said the young woman, in a slightly veiled voice which I had never heard in her. "Do you recollect, when you left the 'charming comrade, but really too puritanical'? You were very fond of that poor Jacques, but, after all, he often bored you, and I never could have believed—"

The country is quite empty of people. The Wolf's Rock shines in the sun. At the entrance to an alley of chestnuts stands a worm-eaten bench. Marthe sits down on it, I beside her.

"You do not trust me any more," continues the veiled voice, the quality of which penetrates me and causes my nerves to vibrate strangely. "You used to call me your confidante; I did not frighten you like Jacques. I understood your little weaknesses. . . . I can scarcely understand you at all now." The voice stopped for a very

short instant, then grew firmer. "It is your wife who talks to me now. You are making her unhappy. Why?"

I start; the young woman places her hand on my arm.

"She imagines that you loved Jacques so much that it is frightful for you to think that you took her away from him, even after his death. That is not true. You did not love Jacques so much as all that. And, besides, why should you have come here? She thinks at other moments that you are jealous, that you cannot forgive her for having been married before. She is frightened at the way in which you scrutinize her memories, frightened at the way Jacques talked to you of her. And yet you are not a lunatic, are you? You are not seeking a spice to your love in trying to revive the details of the past, details which wound you and her, too, when you recall them."

What she says is hateful to me. Nevertheless, I listen because of that voice which benumbs me by a physical charm. She drops her syllables with a delicious fluency of accent which I remark and which thrills me. I make an effort to reply:

"I don't understand what you say. All this exists only in Lucette's imagination. . . . I am

working, and my work absorbs me. We live at a time when sentiment cannot hold the first place in life. . . ."

At the same time a harsh irritation takes possession of me, not so much against this woman who is talking to me as against Lucette, against Lucette who profanes our intimacy, who watches me, picks me to pieces, and credits me with behaving like a Sadic character. The thought of all that these women may have said of me rises like a nausea. Am I jealous? Am I depraved? That is the enigma which excites them, this is what gave to Marthe Leclerc's eyes the other evening that feline phosphorescence. I cannot help laughing aloud, a sharp laugh which frightens my companion.

"What is the matter with you?"

I control myself. "Your prodigies of imagination, you women. Lucette invents all sorts of things; you believe her, you construct a whole romance. . . . As if just now there were not other subjects of conversation."

"I do not need what Lucette says in order to find you strange, my dear sir, and not very polite."

I suffer because she has laid aside her musical voice to take this cutting tone. I desire to have

her begin again pronouncing her syllables as she did before. I take her hand:

"Pray don't be angry. I did not mean to offend you."

She turned her face toward mine. A light which resembles triumph illumines it. She asks:

"I still please you?"

"You please me too much."

I replied without knowing the words which I was going to say. They arrived ready formed at my lips. I think I can detect in myself something like Don Juan's serenade; there is a discordance between my thoughts and a sort of sensual accompaniment that vibrates beneath the melody which I wish to have noble and clean.

Marthe sighs. "You know very well that I like you, too. I always liked you. If I made friends with Lucette, it was from the day when I realized that you had fascinated her. You are made for that. It comes from your eyes."

When I reached home I found on my table the draft of my despatch, but I have no more enthusiasm. Will every day bring me a new danger?

June 2, 1916.

When the Master is present I recover my poise and composure. Working for an object which is

external to me, I expend my energy with delight. It seems that thousands of formless larvæ, sketched in my mind, escape from their cocoons, shake themselves, prepare to spread their wings under the influence of a beneficent heat. The Master came with the lame pupil; they have been here for several days; they work with me, they talk. Who can tell the marvelous virtue of conversations when idea calls to idea, when a short phrase suddenly crystallizes about itself a world of confused thoughts?

The machines are completed, the experiments have succeeded and the Master has congratulated me in words which I cannot forget. I have kept him in order to present to him a new plan, the bold application of a recent discovery to a war problem. He and the lame pupil experiment with me. During the day, shut up in the carriage-house, we modify the little model which I constructed roughly with the help of Justin; in the evenings the Master, with a pencil in his hand, draws lines on white paper and talks.

Certainly, I am relieved when the Master is present; I no longer have the frightful sensation of being outside of everything, misunderstood by everybody, pulled about by instincts which worry me. I no longer ask myself a hundred times a

day, a hundred times a night, the most hallucinating questions. I work, I discuss, I am interested without effort.

And even with Lucette everything becomes more simple because I am less engrossed in watching her, in observing her moods. To-day the Master and I were seated at the end of the garden. The air was buoyant, the climbing-roses were breaking out into clumps of half-opened buds. Lucette was coming down the path with Charlot. She was bareheaded, fresh, and delicate, and the child was bounding along, clinging to her hand; the group gave an impression of strength, of life, and of beauty.

"Your wife is delicious," said the Master.

For a fugitive moment, like a ray of the sun which shines out between two clouds, I had the feeling that I was happy. Lucette sat down by us. A tender light bathed the lines of her face, flooded them with brightness. She seemed to me made of a dazzling and fragile paste, and she exhaled a charm which, for that brief moment, appeared to me spiritualized. Charles held a little bunch of rosebuds; his mother, taking the child's hand in her own, guided him toward me.

"Give the flowers to papa, darling."

I met Lucette's look, anxious, faithful, and

submissive. A wave of tenderness swept over me. *She* was there, after all, and she loved me. Then the wave vanished, the ray of sunshine was veiled because the consuming idea returned:

"She loves me. What does that mean? She loves the good looks of Marcel, who fascinates women, as the other one says."

Lucette's head was bent, and her teeth shone between her lips. I thought of Marthe Leclerc. In spite of myself I reflected that Lucette, as I had seen her for the last two months, was not less deceiving for me than Marthe Leclerc would have been if I had married her. Marthe Leclerc had been attracted by Marcel, or at least by the envelope which contained the soul of Marcel, and Lucette had been also.

I had become gloomy. I saw that Lucette perceived it; she rose with a slightly timid gesture and said, with a sigh:

"I will go in again with Charlot. We do not wish to disturb your conversation."

As she went, the Master touched my shoulder. "My friend, one must not ask too much of women. This one loves you, and you make her unhappy. Why?"

I turned away my head.

"I have already told you that one must not look for happiness, Marcel. All happiness which one analyzes turns to dust under one's hand. One must not be exacting, one must not be positive; one must be kind."

Then I remembered, with secret shame, the earnest desire which I had entertained of making Lucette happy. I remembered all the dreams which I had had in my old existence of assuring her happiness; I remembered that there have been moments when I should have allowed myself to be nailed to a gibbet in order to spare her a pang. I remembered also that I had tried to persuade myself, quite recently, that if I married her it was in order to make her life happy. And I was filled with remorse.

Leaving the Master a little later, I went in. Lucette was in her room. I joined her there. She was sitting before the window with Charlot on her lap, and was singing softly. A weary sadness overspread her face. I felt pity mixed with embarrassment. I came up slowly; the blue sky behind the glass appeared to me in perfect harmony with what I felt.

"Lucette, my darling, it seems to me that I have not seen you for hours."

She leaned her face against Charlot's head

and looked at me. A sudden joy was lighted in the depths of her look.

"You do not come to see me often enough," she said. She let the child slip off from her knees, rose, and, taking my arm, said: "You love me, Marcel? Tell me that you love me. . . ."

She was anxious. I drew her to me. "I love you."

I thought: "Is it not of primordial importance *to be able* to give happiness to a creature whom one has chosen out of all?" But I was profoundly sad.

June 6, 1916.

They have gone. Their talks during these last days have disturbed me intolerably. Why did I tear the delicate web of peace which was beginning to weave itself around my anguish? Why did I slyly lead the Master to the edge of my secret? They will never know, he and the lame pupil, *how* I listened to them during those evenings of torture, and that I was more anxious and trembling before them than ever a sick man could have been, concealing his condition in order to question physicians, and hearing them discuss the fatal character of his symptoms.

One of the favorite diversions of the Master on a summer evening is to work out paradoxes

on general ideas. He goes into it as into a tournament, handles an idea as a fencing-master handles a foil, and the lame pupil, face to face with him, parries and counters. It is a limbering-up exercise for their minds as a sport is for one's muscles.

But think of the poor devil, secretly a monster, horrified and trembling in the background.

They have gone. I remember their words, I try to reconstruct their discussions. Step by step I go forward into a hell where gloomy phantoms terrify me.

The reason I wanted to make the experiment was because the Master and I were alone in the carriage-house, transformed into a laboratory, and the sound of the rain on the glass roof recalled Arcachon.

Ingeniously, almost treacherously, I approached the subject of personality. Is there not in each of us an indestructible I lodged in a perishable body? Can one not conceive the dissociation of these two elements in any way but by death?

I hoped, yes, I hoped—I think—that the Master would divine, and I breathed quickly as I waited to be able to lay down my lead.

Did he not begin to divine at Arcachon? Did he not call me Jacques?

It will be hard for me to forget the tone which he took, the tone of a man of somewhat ponderous erudition:

"Two elements? What childishness! The soul and the body, the companions which we were shown by priests when we were little!"

From this arose those discussions with the lame pupil which revived in me the anguish of the first days, those of the Awakening.

What did they say? I was too ill at ease, as I listened to them, to be able to seize the structure of their debates. I know that I clung mentally to the lame pupil as to a savior, while I hated the Master who seemed to be carelessly pushing me into the blackest of gulfs.

The first night, after I had started them off, they spoke of the consciousness which we have of our acts. Yes, that night, in the laboratory, the Master outlined a very strange theory:

"Our physical constitution rules our actions; these are connected with one another by the nature of the molecules of which we are composed, and by the relation of them with the outside world. What Marcel calls 'personality,' what philosophers call 'consciousness,' is a superadded perception which takes cognizance of events, which registers them, but never orders them.

"Our consciousness is a spectator which we have within us, and which never intervenes in our existence. It is a passenger, not a pilot—but this passenger has the illusion that he commands the maneuver when he only submits to it."

The lame pupil protested violently. I wanted to call out to him:

"You are right. I know that you are right, I whose consciousness has changed its habitation, I who am the pilot of another vessel. And I steer this vessel because the Master himself recognized that I was—"

The next day (it must have been the next day), on the terrace with the stone balustrade, the lame pupil bantered the Master:

"So we are only two automata who exchange words on a philosophic question, and nothing which happens in our brains acts on our words? Is it not simpler to admit that we have two intelligences and two wills, and that these intelligences and wills exercise a preponderant influence on what we say?"

The lame pupil went on: "I believe in the power of the Idea. The Idea rules the world, not matter."

"Nonsense," replied the Master. "The Idea, Thought, is a form of matter, the result of a

particular activity of matter. Say, if you like, that you do not admit that this form of activity can be without effect on our actions. Assert, as many excellent minds do, that the perception which we have of the exterior world modifies our reactions toward that exterior world. You are not obliged, for that reason, to deny that thought is a physico-chemical phenomenon of a particular kind, but still a physico-chemical phenomenon."

"No," said the lame pupil. "Thought is something quite different. It belongs to an order of phenomena which you will never study in a laboratory. Undoubtedly the physical reactions of what I persist in calling our body influence our conduct. But from there to explaining our conduct by these reactions! Explain history by the simple play of exterior conditions on mechanical beings, explain religious actions, the martyrs, and that which is going on to-day—the war, our war, which is a war of ideas. If you deny the Power of Thought, you deny that which makes us men."

I thought him an impressive figure as he stood in the light of the setting sun and declared:

"The personality of each of us is a reality, not an illusion. We are pilots, we direct the machine which is intrusted to us. The imper-

fections of the machine hamper us, but we control them."

The Master shook the ashes out of his pipe. "P-fff!"

Then he began coldly to explain that the notion of personality is a property of the human brain. Then, too, my suffering began to increase.

"It is a physico-chemical phenomenon. Modify the brain compartments and you will modify the conscience and the memory of the individual. Certain men have all their lives possessed two alternating personalities, two perfectly reasonable personalities. With each personality they recovered memories, affections, habits, sometimes the knowledge of a language which the other personality did not possess. Shake up my cerebral matter and I shall think myself God the Father, like thousands of poor creatures who people our asylums and who recollect creating the world in six days."

Lucette interrupted him, coming out of the house. I felt like throwing myself on her neck and crying out:

"Perhaps you are right, after all. Perhaps I am Marcel. *But in that case you have married a madman.*"

Yesterday, after looking at the stars, the Master took my arm. "What do you think of your two elements, Marcel, of the body and the soul, the two old companions?"

And, turning toward the lame pupil: "Be modest in the presence of the stars. You are like me, like every being, a simple chemical combination. If some prodigious savant were to reproduce your body identically, just as it is at present, with the most minute substances which compose it, your soul—or at least what you call your soul—would be inside it. Perhaps it would be sufficient for me to reproduce your brain, or a very little part of your brain, for the individual in whom I had reproduced it to find himself with your intelligence, the recollections which you have at this moment, your opinions and your beliefs. Thought, memory, are in the last analysis chemical reactions. If you put into identical retorts the same substances in the same conditions, the results will be identical."

"This view is offensive," said the lame pupil. "You may laugh at me, but I believe in immortal souls. You will never create a soul."

"The commonest women create them," said the Master; "they need nine months for it."

The lame pupil shrugged his shoulders. "I

am astonished, Master," he said, "that you, who are so intelligent, should have the immense weakness to believe that everything can be understood by comparisons and words."

"Heredity is not a word," replied the Master. "I admit your immortal soul for a moment. We must suppose it carried by an indestructible bit of substance, a psychical atom, which nothing can annihilate. Is it admissible that the psychical atom of the son should be joined to that of the father and the mother?"

The lame pupil replied to him, I believe, that the very grossness of the hypothesis which consists in making the soul a material atom condemns the materialistic doctrine.

"Analyze, reason as much as you like. The words and phrases of articulate language seem to me a frightfully barbarous implement when you make use of them to try to touch that flame which burns in each of us, which burns in you, Master, to the point of directing your life, so that the realities of your life hardly interest you. You devote yourself to science, and you assert that your thought, in its development, is always passive. And yet your thought, in its pride, wishes itself to weigh and parcel out the elements which compose it. Ah! I prefer the follies of the

spiritualists to yours. They at least admit the existence of a world which we cannot perceive, a world which does not come within the bounds of the *explainable*. I am far from believing in discarnate souls which wander through space looking for a material envelope, and table-turning makes me smile. Still, when I hear you assert, in the tone in which you describe an experiment, that thought can be fabricated, then I turn to the Brahmins who work miracles."

Discarnate soul? Chemical substance? Strange dilemma!

And if I had cried out my distress to them, and if they had believed me, would not each of them have found an explanation in his theory?

I got up in the middle of the night. I went to the Master's door; I touched the cold brass handle without turning it, without deciding to ask:

"Do you believe it is possible to transform a man into another man by infusing into him a bit of the brain of that other man?"

Our double wound, the ambulance— Perhaps I am not mad. But how I should prefer that the lame pupil were right, and how I want to believe that he is right!

June 16th, 1916.

I have been tender with Lucette; I have quieted her with words of love; I have stifled the rancor which came to me—for, after all, it is two years, only two years, since we watched together the opening of the buds of the climbing-roses, and she told me that she could not live without me.

There are moments when I stifle. Did she not say to me yesterday:

"Listen, Marcel. I swear to you that I did not know what love was before I married you."

Is she lying? Is she honest? I shall never know. I simply see clearly, every minute, that her past life with me has left in her mind no other trace than a perpetual fear of causing me uneasiness, of making me jealous.

I wish I had never seen her again, that I had shut myself up in the Capharnaum.

As for Marthe Leclerc, I avoid her. With her and with Lucette I feel too strongly the monstrous duality of my individuality. They see in me nothing but Marcel, and the fear comes to me of letting my personality founder little by little, of coming to model myself on the opinion which they have formed of Marcel.

It is bad enough that there are moments when

I ask myself with terror whether the fact of inhabiting Marcel's body is not reacting slowly on my mind. And it is too much that I should be influenced by a woman's voice, as I was the other day in the alley of chestnuts; it is too much that I should like the candies and flowers which Marcel preferred.

Why is it that I am probably the first being who has survived such a nightmare?

V

THE PHANTOMS

July, 1916.

EVERYWHERE and always, for the last two weeks, disgust and fear have mastered me. I try to absorb myself in the construction of my machine, but it is all in vain.

From the day when I met Marthe in the alley of chestnuts I might have foreseen what has happened. I did foresee it, perhaps, since I resolved never to be alone with her, but it was of no use.

I had decided to fly from her; she had decided to meet me. She did meet me; it was inevitable. I met her in the street and she took me up to her apartment.

This little apartment, which she thought was full of memories for me, reminded me, Jacques, of nothing. I heard without surprise, even without curiosity, that Marcel made love to her and that she resisted. That became clear from the

first words which she said. She had taken off her hat and was standing. The blinds were closed, and the room, perfumed by two large bouquets of roses and peonies, had that charm peculiar to rooms which have remained cool during the very hot weather. I had gone up because I could not refuse to make this visit, but I honestly believed that I was only seeking an occasion to take my leave.

Marthe set about awakening Marcel's memories, which she takes for mine. I listened to her attentively because it interested me to see up to what point that which she said remained without an echo in my memory. So long as I attended to her words everything went well. I said to myself: "If I were Marcel, perhaps I should not see so clearly the address which this woman employs to seduce me. I should allow myself to be caught by this veiled emotion, which is assuredly an artifice."

A certain sense of superiority came to me because I saw through her coquettish maneuvers. Then, suddenly, I ceased to attach any sense to the words which she was pronouncing, and I perceived that I was listening to her voice, and that its liquid and caressing tone sank into me, numbed me as it had done that other day.

At the same time I noticed the delicacy of her skin beneath the hair on her temples. I knew that it was time for me to go. I rose. She held me back.

"Oh! how you are hurrying to escape!"

She was close against me; it was now from her that the odor of peonies and roses seemed to come, and a ray of sunlight gilded her delicate skin. I put my arm around her, and it was I who begged her to love me.

Is it I? Is it really I—that is to say, that which constitutes the conscious and reasoning essence of my being? Is it not, rather, this wretched carcass inherited from Marcel in which I am imprisoned, and which imposes on me his impulses and his desires?

July 5, 1916.

Have the Master's theories demoralized me? I lose control of my actions a little more every day. I have paid daily visits, almost, to Marthe. I am irritated and discontented when I leave her, but still I go back.

And I do not work any longer, or, at any rate, so little that it is not worth speaking of.

And then I must recognize the fact that I spoiled my afternoon to-day stupidly and disgracefully, in a manner which worries me.

I had gone out for a walk in the country, as I sometimes do, to escape the temptation to go to see Marthe—the mad, angry walk of a prisoner up and down his dungeon. When I got back I was very warm. As I passed before the lodge of the porter, fat old Mother François, I saw her arranging glasses in her tiled kitchen. I went in without thinking, as if from force of habit, and said:

"Good morning, Madame François. Have you any absinthe?"

Now I have never drunk absinthe, and it is not like me to go and drink in the wineshop which my porter keeps for the workmen. I had no sooner spoken than I said to myself that it was very surprising that I should be there.

Mother François, wiping her hands on her apron, turned on me a meaning look. She is a corpulent creature, mannish and mustached, who has always been extremely distasteful to me. She gave a gurgle which she meant, I suppose, to be the laugh of an indulgent accomplice. It nauseated me, and I said, to cut the incident short:

"I am very thirsty and came in mechanically, as I remembered that you sold things to drink. I recollect that absinthe has been

prohibited since the beginning of the war. Excuse me!"

I had reached the door when I felt my shoulder touched.

"Don't go, Monsieur Marcel," she murmured, familiarly, so familiarly that I was amazed, and more and more annoyed.

Her fat cheeks shook beneath her dirty cap. She looked at me almost protectingly, like a nurse who has found her strayed charge; she had got between me and the door, and I was on the point of pushing her rudely aside. What could there be in common between us, this drunkard, kept on at the works because her husband had died of an accident there, and me? But she quickly closed some of the shutters and opened a closet. A dozen green bottles appeared.

"I know it's forbidden, Monsieur Marcel, but of course I have a bottle for you." And, joining the action to the words, she said: "I will put it under my apron and carry it to the laboratory for you, with a glass and some sugar. You have cold water there. Nobody will disturb you."

I let her do as she said, and went with her. The reason why does not matter, nor whether I am astonished and angry now as I am astonished

and angry every time I think of Marthe. I did go with her. When she had left I bolted the door of the laboratory, uncorked the bottle, and prepared a glass under the spigot carefully and methodically.

Here am I, Jacques, with a glass of absinthe in my hand—I who have always had a horror of alcoholism, even in its mildest forms—and when I know, at that, that absinthe is forbidden, and I have procured this absinthe from one of my own employees. I say this to myself, but a terrible thirst contracts my throat, the papillæ of my tongue are dry, and I murmur:

"It is idiotic. I was wrong to walk so far in the sun."

And I drink it—that glass, and then another.

The bell of the works, ringing for the end of the day, wakes me. Was I really asleep? What a strange dream I had! Mother François, with her hands on her hips, was laughing diabolically. With her was Marthe, holding a bottle, and they whispered together like two criminals, yes, like two criminals.

What were they saying as Marthe poured out

the poison with that dazzling smile which I knew so well, and a phosphorescence in her eyes? What were these sorceresses saying, the old and the young one? They said:

"Let us put the passenger to sleep."

July 7th.

A strange and new phase of my torture has begun. I know, now, that I am not free. I am not free to give up Marthe; I am not free to leave this city for a month, as Lucette would like. I am bound indissolubly to a companion with whom I have to reckon, and who tyrannizes over me. The Master was not wrong in his terrible paradox. Marcel's body and nerves are stronger than my will.

I went away alone toward the vineyards and meadows which surround the Wolf's Rock. I sat down beneath a low fig-tree and tried to think. At first, when I became conscious of the astounding phenomenon which had transported me into another body, I could reflect. I thought then that so long as my intellectual personality—my memory, my will—was intact, I was indisputably myself, and that it depended on my free will to mark out the line of conduct which I should pursue. I was mistaken. But what was

this error compared with that the extent of which I recognize better every day?

Give up Marthe? Resolve that we shall go away for a month's holiday? I am as incapable of it as that little cottony seed which flies in the sunlight is of resisting the wind which carries it along.

Do I love Marthe? The absurdity of the question appears to me so great that I can only answer by one of those bursts of laughter which have become common with me. I do not love Marthe because I do not in the least care whether she is happy or not, since I should regard her disappearance out of my life as a deliverance. Nevertheless, it is impossible for me to refrain from going to her at the hours when she awaits me, and when I hold her in my arms it seems to me that I would give everything in the world to keep her there always.

Lying under my fig-tree, over against the dry slopes with their rows of vines, I try to remember the opinion which I formerly had of Marcel.

I liked him, but I felt sorry for him, and despised him a little because he led an irregular and ill-ordered existence. I was convinced that he could, as easily as I, have put away love-

affairs out of his life, have married, and have remained faithful to his wife.

I believed that, just as I believed that I knew Lucette in the same way that one understands the architecture and the plan of a house, the details of a map, the construction of a piece of mechanism.

I try to recollect whether I ever used to feel physical sensations of the strength of those which I feel to-day. The old organization of my nerves never unloosed in me the violence of emotion which I now know. Perfumes were far from being what they are, and sounds did not stir me as they do since I have changed my habitation.

And no woman ever made a point of attracting me as Marthe and Lucette desire to attract me.

July 10th.

I was lying on the leather divan which I have had taken to the laboratory. Half opening my eyes, I saw Justin. Standing by my table, he was looking at the partly empty bottle of absinthe and the sticky spoon lying among the steel tools. He shook his head and turned toward me.

It was only when my look met his that I knew that I was not dreaming. In this affectionate look there were sadness, pity, and perhaps con-

tempt. My heart contracted at it. Justin, seeing my eyes open, blushed violently.

I was stupid enough to get angry. "Can't I be left alone? I had locked myself in. What are you doing here?"

He stammered that I had pushed the bolt without closing the door, so that he had come in easily.

"Madame is looking for you, Monsieur Marcel, and I thought I had better warn you."

He again looked at the bottle and the disorder on the table. My cheeks burned. Was my new vice already the talk of the works?

"What do you mean? Go out."

"Well, Monsieur Marcel, I think Madame had better not come in *just now*. She will not come in so long as I am here. She is waiting for me."

I sprang up. In the twinkling of an eye I had thrust the bottle of absinthe and the glass under the table. I washed my face in cold water, tied my cravat afresh, buttoned up my waistcoat.

"Where is Madame?"

"In the garden; the postman brought her a letter. She asked me to see if you were here."

He seemed so unhappy that I was ashamed of my irritability. "Forgive me, Justin, for being cross to you."

Then he spoke impulsively. "It is not that, Monsieur Marcel," he said, awkwardly. "Let me explain. It gave me so much pleasure to see that you were not as you used to be. Now it's beginning again. You went to Mother François because it is forbidden in the café. Pretty soon you will be asking Mother François to lend you her cottage on the Wolf Road for your affairs with women, as she used to do. If Monsieur Jacques had known that! And how many Sundays you spent there half drunk! Discharge me if you like, Monsieur Marcel. I did not like you much formerly, but I am fond of you now, and I should like to see you be careful—"

I pushed him aside to go to Lucette, whose head appeared in the half-open door.

"You are pale, Marcel. I came to tell you that Aunt Martine writes that she is coming. But how pale you are! Are you ill?"

The same day, 9. P.M.

After taking Lucette home I came back to the laboratory. I tied up the bottle of absinthe in a newspaper and went out by the little gate which opens on the fields.

"Ah! Marcel used to drink, and I must drink, too. I shall not be free not to drink."

I felt disgusted, angry, almost defiant.

Bang!

I threw my parcel from the top of a bank. It broke against a stone at the bottom of a ditch with a sound of shattered glass. It seems to me that I have been revenging myself. There, under the brush and thistles, lies the proof of my victorious will.

I must persevere. What baseness I was coming to, little by little! Because the Master's words influenced me? Because of weakness? Was Marcel really worth so little as all that? Marcel, whom all women loved? Women? Justin, certainly, saw that something was changed.

"It gave me so much pleasure to see that you were not as you used to be!" And, "I did not like you much formerly."

Jacques, my friend, overthrow the evil companion. You can really be on top when you choose. The ship will obey you if you have the will to steer it.

I could embrace Justin this evening. The dear old man!

July 18th.

I am seated on the parapet of the little bridge, near the place where they do washing. A wheat-

field waves before the hills. The inside of my hands is saturated with the odor of Marthe. Shall I never be able to free myself from her? I have conquered the other temptation. but what was that compared with this?

The twilight is marvelously calm. It seems to me that I am bathed in an almost supernatural light. A beetle crosses the road dragging its legs in the dust.

"Poor little irresponsible automaton!"

Life is all around me. A flock goes down the valley, swallows chase one another with short cries, and here are human voices.

I lean over. They are two girls who have stopped on the path which leads to the washing-place. One of them has been weeping; she is handsome in spite of her swollen eyes, and is twisting between her fingers the handkerchief which serves her as a fichu.

"What business is it of yours?" she says. "Let me pass."

"No; you said that you would not go, and you shall not go. You are not in your senses now. If you go you will be beaten when you get home to-night and you will say to-morrow that I ought not to have let you go. Pick up your linen and go home."

"No!" The handsome one stamped her foot. Her breast rose and fell, her lips trembled.

"Pick up your linen," repeated her companion.

There was a silence. The flushed face of the girl with the foulard was turned toward me and I saw her look, the look of one possessed. Suddenly a strange panic took possession of me, my heart beat with terrible violence; it seemed to me that *I could feel* the struggle which was going on in this obscure creature. The expression of her eyes appeared familiar to me; I could see there, as it were, the flames of contradictory impulses, and I was frightened with a dull, unreasoning fear.

"Let me go, I say!"

She pushed aside her companion who pursued her as she ran. Their steps sounded on the dry earth. I rose. A bitterness seemed to burst in me, an immense distress overpowered me.

"I am not the only one."

And I went home, moved by pity for all men, my brothers.

July 16, 1916.

Aunt Martine got out of a victoria covered with a fringed white top. As we are not leaving Ville-sur-Sorgue the excellent woman has come to see us. She smilingly kissed us all three.

"My dear Marcel, what a transformation! You do not limp at all."

Lucette started at this exclamation, and looked at me anxiously. I no longer limp. I know it very well, and, little by little, as the machines down there in the distant works approach completion, the necessity of being perfectly well appears to me more strongly.

Aunt Martine brings with her an atmosphere of calm simplicity. She is determined to find everything all right. She judges that our happiness is without a cloud. After breakfast we remained in the dining-room with the smoking coffee. Charlot, in a dimity gown, was muttering, half awake, on his mother's knees. A bouquet of anemones stood on the table near a bowl of peaches. The picture was so homelike and so peaceful that any one would have envied the scene. Aunt Martine was nodding her head as if to bless and approve our repose. I thought: "It is fortunate that the poor creature does not see beyond the appearances. How could she suspect that I am engaged in the strangest of struggles?"

Lucette was raising a piece of sugar in her fingers. She held it in the air, mechanically, as

though her thoughts absorbed her to the point of preventing her from looking after her movements; then she suddenly blushed and threw the sugar into her cup. I asked myself, "What was she thinking about?" And I thought that I divined that she had made the same reflection that I had on the subject of the perfect picture of security which we presented. Had she, too, been struck by the contrast between the picture and the reality?

I looked at her attentively. I saw that her eyelids were slightly tired, and I remarked a little line at the corner of her mouth. The line gave to her smile a weary bitterness which had not struck me before.

From what is she suffering? I have become infinitely gentler with her. It is she whose love is changed, is become more restrained, more anxious, so to speak. It is not possible that she has perceived that Marthe— I had never looked at my adventure with Marthe from that point of view.

What is she thinking of? Perhaps she is remembering the days when we received a visit from Aunt Martine when I was Jacques. Perhaps this memory causes her an acute regret. It is impossible for me to know. I look at

the little line, which contracts. Is it jealousy, melancholy regrets, passion disappointed in not finding a sufficient echo? In any case, she suffers, and I am profoundly unhappy at it.

Aunt Martine is teasing Charles with a ball which she hides and brings out again. The child lies back and utters cries of impatience and pleasure. I am still watching Lucette, and an immense compassion comes over me, compassion for the soul which is inclosed in the pretty body of this woman. Beyond what is on the surface, for a short second, I love and feel really sorry for the thinking entity which is a prisoner, like mine; which is bound, like mine, to a system of nerves, of muscles, of organs, which tyrannize over it. I am conscious of the divergence of will and instincts which compels me to act differently to what I wish; this divergence certainly exists in Lucette, as in all men, our brothers. I feel it the more acutely that my personality was suddenly associated with a body to which it was not accustomed.

Under the windows pass young girls, apprentices, no doubt, who are walking about while waiting to return to the work-rooms. They sing, with a captivating and lively cadence:

Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré
La fille du coupeur de paille,
Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré
La fille du coupeur de blé. . . .

Ah! laissez-la, laissez-la passer,
La fille du coupeur de paille,
Ah! laissez-la, laissez-la passer,
La fille du coupeur de blé. . . .[1]

Their young voices brighten the room, like rays of sunshine which find their way between the slats of a shutter. I feel strongly a sensation of incoherence and mystery. And then, again, pity awakes in me, including, together with Lucette, these young girls who pass, and all human beings.

July 17, 1916.

To-day, leaving Aunt Martine with Lucette, I went and shut myself up in the carriage-house

[1] On my road I met
The daughter of the straw-cutter,
On my road I met
The daughter of the wheat-cutter. . . .

Ah! let her, let her pass,
The daughter of the straw-cutter,
Ah! let her, let her pass,
The daughter of the wheat-cutter. . . .

which has become my laboratory. I had taken a letter from the Master, the last, that in which he announces that the manufacture of the war-machines is progressing very rapidly. I read it over and over again, in order to get myself into the necessary state of mind. I wished to think of the war, of the effort which I ought to make for the war. I strove, with all my strength, to concentrate my intellectual activity about a nucleus of precise scientific considerations. Two bees, shut up in the large room, chased each other buzzing in a band of golden dust. It seemed to me that it was they who prevented my collecting my ideas. They recalled a clematis, always humming with a sound of wings, near Marthe's house.

"I will not go. I am Jacques, desirous of living nobly, capable of resisting a physical attraction."

I went up to the bench. The noise of the bees came nearer, withdrew. Above the glass skylight the blue of the sky was deep; birds passed through it with a flight full of grace. Over there, certainly, the clematis was giving out its perfume. Marthe, hidden behind the curtain of her window, was watching for me.

"I am Jacques. If I do not wish to go there I will not go."

The little pieces of metal were cold in my hands. I looked at them with a sort of imbecility. Their structure seemed to me incomprehensible. I said aloud:

"If I touch them to-day I shall spoil what I have begun."

I went out in a rage. Marthe received me with a triumphant smile. Marthe tries to captivate me more and more. I attract her, and, besides, it seems interesting to her to separate me from Lucette. Every time that I have a lucid interval I become conscious of this, and the maneuvers which she employs to seduce me fill me with disgust. There are moments when I feel like rebelling against her, like seizing hold of her, like treating her brutally. This afternoon she cried:

"Why did you not marry me? I should have understood you. Marcel, I have always understood you. You used to say that I had a subtle prescience of what you were. I have it still. You pretend to have changed, you affect a rough manner; you are not changed at all. I understand you better than any woman ever will."

She was odious to me. It seemed to me that behind her face there was no soul at all; that she consisted of appetites, secret movements of

matter. I had the feeling that if I let her have her way she would kill my soul. Behind Lucette's eyes I divine the sad prisoner who struggles; here, nothing.

"You think that you know me and that you understand me, Marthe?"

"Very well."

How could she divine the appalling irony which is growing in me, which crushes the little attempts she makes to take possession of my mind, of *my* mind?

"You understand me, Marthe? You know *who* I am, what I think?"

She cried: "Are you going crazy? You frighten me. Let go of me."

Leaning over her, I held her hands, and my look plunged into hers, was so furious, so threatening, that she was seized with terror.

I pretended to laugh. "You see very well that you do not understand me. A woman never understands a man. Two human beings never understand each other — do you hear? Never."

She sulks, having taken refuge in a deep easy-chair. I go on, but not for her:

"On the one hand, the elements which we have in common with the brutes are pleased,

attract one another. On the other hand, there are tiny islets of our inward life which can be perceived by other beings. Pure intelligences come in contact, can know each other, enough to recognize each other. That is all. You do not understand me at all. I do not understand you, either. So give up the habit of calling things by names which they do not deserve. And smooth out that frown which disfigures your forehead."

The same day, midnight.

The door of my study is locked. Lucette is asleep up-stairs. With my elbows on the table and my head in my hands I am reflecting.

"You do not limp at all!"

This phrase of Aunt Martine's is resuscitated in the night of my brain. It springs up in the midst of my anxieties, disperses them, makes of them a handful of miserable, selfish worries which fly away frightened.

Since I have been limping less and the machines in the laboratory are nearing completion an idea has come to me. I have begun to realize that though chained in the depths of a cavern in darkness and in terror I can, when I am cured, escape easily and honorably.

This evening the Idea shines more brilliantly.

"I do not limp any longer, so I can go back to what millions of Frenchmen are doing."

With this new light it suddenly appears to me that it is not so important as I thought to know *who* I am. The important thing is to know what I ought to do and what I shall do.

I have opened the window. A ray of moonlight trembles on the pool back of the works. The air is marvelously light. Perhaps I am a lunatic, perhaps the victim of a combination of astounding circumstances. Is it necessary that I should know which? I am impelled to do things which I regret afterward. Am I the only human being who does that?

As to details, the flight of the machine often escapes from my control, but I am able to order the general direction of my course.

I broke the bottle the other day. No doubt it would have been difficult for me to keep it and never to drink out of it—but since I did break it?

Summed up, is not the problem quite simple? I have the body of a healthy man to place at the disposal of France and a brain which is capable of understanding and directing the action of the war-machines which will soon be ready.

What then?

There is Lucette, but would it not be better for her?

And how can I do anything else? Whether I am Jacques or Marcel, how can I do anything else?

At last I feel that calm has come to me.

VI

THE DELIVERANCE

End of July, 1916.

SIMULTANEOUSLY there arrive a letter from the Master which announces the approaching trial of the finished machines and the *communiqué* of the Somme offensive.

I am exorcised. I no longer feel a mountain weighing on my breast. Heroic verses come to my lips. Once more it seems to me that I shall succeed in becoming quite myself, in freeing myself of all these bonds: to work, there is nothing but this—to get close to other men, to be useful, to help the Right to triumph.

Yes. I am really the same that I was two years ago, the day when all the tocsins of the town rang for the mobilization.

Evening.

Lucette came to me in the laboratory, which she never visits. She sat down and said to me:

"I know very well what is going on. I know why you did not want to leave here. It is not your work; you hardly work at all any more. That woman, that woman whom I introduced into our house!"

Her face was distorted by a jealous fury. She stopped as though she were suffocating, then went on, violently:

"You found fault with me for being too ardent. I did not please you, I bored you; you humiliated me in the love which I bore you; you always found this love too burdensome, you let me understand it, and now you love another woman—and what a woman!"

"I love nobody. You are mistaken."

She shrugged her shoulders and shuddered from head to foot.

"To be deceived and neglected by you was the last thing which I should have expected. I loved you, you will never know how much. It seemed to me that you had only to appear in my life for me to be carried away blindfold in a terrible current. I should have liked to resist, I overwhelmed myself with reproaches. But I was too weak."

She held out her hands, as if to defend herself against an attack;

"I know very well that I have deserved what has happened to me. I should never have loved another man after having lost Jacques. The love which I had for Jacques made me better; that which I have for you preys upon me, kills me. The love which I had for Jacques was reasonable, deliberately accepted. That which I have for you is like a disease of which I should be ashamed. And it is not enough to have had you by turns jealous of my past, domineering, cold to the point of malignity— You must even deceive me, you—you, whom I regret having married every day of my life."

Tears streamed down her cheeks; her eyes gazed into vacancy, behind me:

"Jacques! Who will give me back Jacques, so full of tenderness, of gentleness, of understanding?"

I went to her; never was my secret so near my lips as at that moment. I knelt down and took her hands:

"Lucette, I love you very dearly."

She wept more gently. I also wept. I thought that our souls, liberated for an instant, had united outside of their prisons. I felt that her suffering was mingled with mine, parallel to mine, of the same essence, of the same intensity.

An identical pity came to me for her and for myself.

"I love you, Lucette."

"Then explain to me!"

"I love you."

She was silent. Her panting breast rose and fell. The silence about us was like a prolongation of our absorption in each other. I had a horror of any words which we might have spoken; I felt that they would be false, inaccurate, deceptive. In silence alone might we, perhaps, find each other for a second, a rare second in eternity.

The next morning.

All night the idea pursued me, the idea which has been developing in me since I have limped less badly. It is growing, developing, forcing itself upon me. The strange scene which passed yesterday between Lucette and myself gives it new strength.

I was chained in the depths of a cavern in the dark, in terror, and now I can escape, easily and honorably.

I did not sleep. I rose early. I examined myself passionately in the glass. I do not limp any longer; my leg has become normal. Lucette came and watched me anxiously:

"What is the matter, Marcel?"

I know that the idea comes to her sometimes, but she will not entertain it. She threw herself into my arms. Since yesterday she has been reassured from the point of view of her jealous love, and I am doing all in my power neither to offend nor to hurt her. But there are moments so heavy that it seems to me that I cannot bear it.

The same day, midday.

I went out into the sunlight, fierce and burning from the earliest hours of the morning. A feverish impatience drove me. I rang at the doctor's door. As I pulled the bell beneath the brass plate I felt like a convict who is going to find out at last if he can break his chain.

That half-hour passed like a dream. The doctor examined me carefully through his tortoise-shell spectacles.

"The paretic condition has certainly disappeared. You are almost cured. I can give you a certificate which you can present at the recruiting station. But do you not think that you could serve in some other way? You have just been married."

I was not listening. I saw that this little man

with the pointed beard admired me. I came near shouting to him:

"You are all wrong with your admiration, like the rest."

I went home. Charlot was drawing up his soldiers in the vestibule. I took him up in my arms and kissed him. Then I went up and wrote to the Master.

The machines will soon be ready. Very good. I shall be ready with the machines.

August 6, 1916.

It is not so simple. The Master is trying to arrange matters.

"It would be preposterous," he writes, "if I did not get permission for you, who know them almost as well as I do and who volunteer for this trying service, to command the first battery of the machines."

He also writes me:

"My friend, I understand you, I admire you, but I am sad. I sometimes ask myself whether you, whether we, are right. . . . When I think of the risk you are going to run my blood runs cold, because I love you, and because I think there are few men who could render to science the services which you will render her. France

has lost Jacques. I now consider that if she were to lose you it would be an equally great misfortune. Think about it."

Think!

August 12, 1916.

I am still waiting. Lucette knows nothing. I have not seen Marthe again. By a singular magic my days are no longer burdensome to me. I go, I come, I look at things as I never have looked at them: the beauty of the sky, the grace of flowers, of grain, of shrubbery. These things all take on an extraordinary importance for me. I look at Charles a great deal, too. I play with him very often, talk to him, try to awaken his attention.

And what a brotherly tenderness has come to me for all human beings, for the sufferings, the faults, the imperfections, the weaknesses, of our unhappy race!

I have taken neither hasheesh nor opium, and yet I compare myself to an eater of hasheesh, a smoker of opium. I am "freed," I float, imponderable, above, outside of realities, and the necessity that my mean and abnormal individuality should soon disappear seems to me inevitable.

One anxiety dominates me. I wish to employ

these days—these days during which I get outside of myself because I feel that I am nearing my goal—I wish to employ them in making Lucette happy. She is always with me, and if she often wounds me she does not know it. For the sake of the brotherly watchfulness with which I protected her for years, for the tender love which I bore her, I wish to leave her with no bitter memories. I watch over her, I concern myself about her every minute—and perhaps that also helps to give me this sensation of lightness. If the experiment had been longer I should perhaps have learned many more things.

August 14, 1916.

How long will this last? I read the newspapers with a glorious thrill. I am before a door which is about to open. To-morrow I also shall be plunged again in the action of the war. I shall feel the impulse which wills to win.

Lucette took away from me a map of the Somme.

"I am afraid," she said. "Swear to me that you are not concealing anything."

I kissed her without answering. She threw her arms about my neck.

August 20, 1916.

The Master has arrived. The lame pupil came with him. The Master looked at me with singular emotion. I understood. He showed me a paper:

"In ten days the machines will start and you, too."

He turned away. A bird was singing in the top of a tree; smoke rose calmly above the kitchen roof.

"I wanted to come to see you for a little while, to give you my instructions, since you, my favorite pupil now, are going with the machines."

I felt his affection. I felt later the sympathy of the lame pupil, who pressed my hand. This is sweet to me. It is sweeter than Lucette's demonstrativeness, because I feel that it is addressed more truly *to me.*

August 21, 1916.

I had to tell Lucette. What passed between us showed me the necessity of ending matters better than all the trials which I had heretofore undergone.

I told her. I still had in my ears her enthusiastic, courageous despair of two years ago. Two years ago she did not utter these cries, she did not cling to me like a fury.

"You shall not go; you have no right to go, to go on purpose. I love you!"

Her hair was hanging loose, she was literally dragging herself at my feet.

"I love you, Marcel. You are my life! I could survive Jacques, but I did not love Jacques. I thought I loved him, but I did not know what love was then! I could not survive you!"

"Be silent!"

The hardness which I had forgotten all these days rose again in me.

"Be silent! You talk selfishly!"

"Do not despise me. I love you! You do not know what it is to love a man, to know that outside of him there is no possibility of love for you, and to lose him! Until I met you I was waiting; I did not know that my life with Jacques was only a waiting. . . . I know it now!"

"Lucette! What sort of a memory of you do you want me to carry away?"

I strive to talk gently to her. The constraint to which I subject myself makes me tremble. Every time that she denies her old love a red gleam passes before me, blinds me. I should like to seize her, to hypnotize her, destroy in her all memory of these last months—that she might

become again what she was when she came to the hospital, with the magnificent despair which she felt for *my* death. But that the troubled regret for this period, which she calls a period of love, should not come to hide her first, her real grief!

She had fallen asleep. I watched her sleep, shaken by sobs, very pale. I placed a kiss on her brow. I murmured:

"Forgive me, Lucette! I have been presumptuous. I wanted to return into the shades of the past, to wrest from the Fates our dead happiness! I only succeeded in giving you pain. I brought you a ferment of evil passion instead of your calm and pure love. Our happiness was not quite dead, since you preserved a pious memory of it. I killed it in you when I tried to resuscitate it. Good-by! It is Jacques who leaves you, and forever, this time."

ANVOURS CAMP, *September 17, 1916.*

. . . We start this evening. The men are practised in handling the machines; the machines obey with perfect docility. Yesterday I saw the sun set for the last time behind the pines. This sunset reminded me of another, in the days when

I was Jacques, the sunset which I saw with my other eyes. How many more will these eyes see?

The Master was with me, the Master who came to help me in putting the finishing touches to the battery. We were walking in silence. His look was palpitating with emotion. He had taken my arm. The warmth of his contact was pleasant to me. I thought:

"For him the two griefs will be only one. He has understood without knowing it."

He said to me:

"The dangers which you run are great; do not increase them by useless imprudence."

He has gone. I am alone with the men and the machines. I am finishing these notes, which I shall keep on my person, on the envelope of which I shall write the Master's name, that the Master may destroy them *after*.

The men are singing. They are going into danger; they know the danger, as I do, but they do not wish, as I wish, to fall under it.

I admire their courage. I admire their strength and youth. I love them. I promise myself to be a good and affectionate chief to them, so long as I am with them.

The trumpets are sounding. The sacred enthusiasm has awakened in me. I say to myself

that I shall have a few fine days *first*, some fine days when I shall do my best. My personality seems to me very secondary, very insignificant this evening, in the midst of this camp swarming with men in blue capes.

Jacques or Marcel, it does not matter. What does matter is that the machines should do their work, that I should advance with all my strength, if only by a few seconds, the hour of triumph.

I am not this one or that; I am a soldier, like all those about me. Come, my children, my brothers, to the post of honor where Danger awaits us.

THE END

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